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### Using Input from Landlords Participating in the Dothan Housing Authority's Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) to Streamline Operations and Increase Retention

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Using Input from Landlords Participating in the Dothan Housing Authority's  
Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) to Streamline Operations and Increase Retention

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the  
Department of College of Business and Public Management  
West Chester University  
West Chester, Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of  
Doctor of Public Administration

By

Michael Corey Threatt

December 2020

## Dedication

I am so humbled and grateful to have my faith and strength, which has provided me with wisdom throughout this process. I want to dedicate the doctoral culminating to my wife, best friend, companion, and teammate, Dr. Jennifer Mozee Threatt. The love of my life and my soulmate. Thank you for all of the sacrifices, encouragement, and for putting up with me. We did it, Baby! We both have accomplished the milestone of our doctorates! I want to thank our three beautiful daughters Melanie, Madison, and Michele, for their love and support. I pray that through our hard work, spiritual guidance, and purpose-driven parenting that you are able to reach your full potential to do something special to change the world through your God-given talent and spiritual gifts. I want to thank my mom for being there for me throughout my life and my family and friends who have supported me through this journey with prayers and encouragement.

As a man of faith, my favorite purpose-driven quote that got me over the hump, "If you can't find your purpose, find your passion, and when you find your passion, this will lead you to find your purpose" by Bishop T.D. Jakes.

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I want to acknowledge my mentors who have devoted their lives to public service and public administration both professionally and academically, my friend and mentor, the late Sterling Bethea, my friend and fraternity brother, the late Derrick Richardson, and my friend and mentor, Gil Machin. My altruistic worldview of public service and public administration has been shaped over the years by these individuals in my career, life, and academic journey. Their wisdom has challenged me to be a transformational leader. Finally, I would like to acknowledge fellow Alabamian, Congressman, the late John Lewis, who inspired the spirit of "Good Trouble" in me to have the moral courage to call out what is wrong and stand for what is right as an ethical public administrator.

## Abstract

The Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) is a public-private partnership between a landlord, voucher holder, and a Public Housing Authority (PHA). However, this public-private partnership appears to be a two-sided partnership instead of a three-way partnership as the HCVP was designed. Over 110,000 landlords have withdrawn from the HCVP since 2009, which has negatively affected housing choices for voucher holders. This phenomenon of landlords leaving the HCVP is a catastrophe problem for the rental housing crisis that is a part of the larger affordable housing crisis. The perception of institutional bureaucracy for landlords is their reality, and the unintended consequence is the price of bureaucracy.

This quantitative research study evaluated landlords' opinions regarding their feelings toward streamlining the operations of the HCVP through technology and if this will increase their retention. This research study chose the convenience sampling of landlords, who are experiential stakeholders in the HCVP. Each landlord participant of the study had an active Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract with the Dothan Housing Authority (DHA) and had been a landlord for at least one year. The descriptive statistics research study provided an objective analysis of the landlords' opinions at the DHA through an online closed-ended survey.

This dissertation addressed the gap in research to better understand landlords' important role through their opinions as experiential stakeholders in the HCVP. This dissertation study also added empirical knowledge by addressing the research gap to create recommendations for policy solutions to retain the landlords' participation in the HCVP.

*Keywords: landlords, technology, streamline, institutional bureaucracy, institutional change, communication, customer service*

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The future of affordable housing in America sits on the shoulders of the largest program, the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) (Schwartz, 2015). However, to guarantee the future of affordable housing, the HCVP must first remove its inherent institutional bureaucracy to address the phenomenon of landlords withdrawing from the program (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). This public-private partnership model is the paradigm of providing affordable housing in today's society and has been a necessity since the Section 8 HCVP was introduced in 1974 (Schwartz, 2015). Public-private partnerships combine government resources with private agents to deliver societal goals such as meeting the needs of affordable housing demand (Ferlie, Lynn & Pollitt, 2005).

This chapter of this dissertation will discuss the complexities of the HCVP and how this public-private partnership could be made better through institutional change. This chapter will also provide a synopsis of the present-day HCVP, discuss the need for the demand-side actor landlord, the purpose for the study, rationale for the study, problem statement, research question, rationale for the methods, significance for study, and a chapter summary. Ultimately, this dissertation will address the research gap to better understand landlords' important role through their opinions as experiential stakeholders in the HCVP. This dissertation research will add to the empirical knowledge base by addressing the research gap and creating policy solution recommendations. These implications will help affordable housing policymakers develop program changes necessary to retain the landlord's participation in the HCVP.



## **Background Overview**

The price of bureaucracy of the Public Housing Authority (PHA) institution is a product of the neoclassical New Deal bureaucratic model (North, 1990; Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). The neoclassical model impedes the optimization of affordable housing programs (North, 1990). Likewise, the neoclassical model has created numerous barriers for the effective and efficient operations of affordable housing programs since its creation during the Great Depression in 1937 (Desmond & Perkins, 2016; North, 1990; Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). The institutional change of the PHA will require the institution to look in the mirror to understand the landlords' perception compared to the PHA's reality. PHAs have the dilemma of making rational decisions of choosing to meet the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) mandates (i.e., "satisfice" approach to meet the status quo) or build sustainable relationships with landlords through institutional change (North, 1990; Riccucci, 2010). This dissertation will analyze landlord opinions by investigating variables of streamlining operations through technology to retain their participation in the HCVP to address the phenomenon of landlords withdrawing from participating in the HCVP.

The federal government utilized the public housing paradigm as its initial program to supply affordable public housing from 1937-1973 (Desmond & Perkins, 2016; Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). However, the failed public housing paradigm prompted the federal government in 1974 to utilize the HCVP as its new policy solution to supply affordable housing (Desmond & Perkins, 2016; North, 1990; Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). The institutional bureaucracy and ineffective practices of the public housing model has infiltrated the current operations and administration of the HCVP (North, 1990). The current problems in the

operations and administration of the HCVP are the results of ineffective and inefficient practices of the PHA (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019).

HUD attempted to adopt the New Public Management (NPM) model into the PHA, where private landlords could meet the demand for affordable housing through principal-agent contracts in the HCVP (Ferlie et al., 2005). Although the principal-agent contract of the public-private partnership between landlords and PHAs is feasible for economic performance, the PHA bureaucracy has been resistant to change to meet landlords' satisfaction and keep the demand-side stakeholder engaged (Cunningham et al., 2018; Douglas, 1990; Ferlie et al., 2005).

The public-private partnership of the HCVP was intended to create institutional change and provide a return on investment for the government because the PHA was no longer the landlord (Denhardt, Denhardt, & Blanc, 2014; Ferlie et al., 2005; North, 1990; Schwartz, 2015).

Therefore, the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract between the landlord and PHA became the guiding document to obtain a return on investment that leads to economic performance (Ferlie et al., 2005; North, 1990, Schwartz, 2015).

Currently, one of the essential variables in successfully managing the HCVP's operational efficiency is the percentage of voucher holders who lease-up with a landlord (HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020; Schwartz, 2015). The success rates are tracked by utilizing a two-year tool that measures how fast a voucher holder can lease-up or find an able and willing landlord to accept their voucher (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020;). The voucher time limit starts with a 60-day timeframe and can be extended for several reasons, such as having a large family, reasonable accommodation, or an extenuating circumstance (Schwartz, 2015). Notably, a voucher extension is not granted because the program participant cannot find a landlord to accept their voucher (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019).

Moreover, without participating landlords, voucher holders have difficulty finding units, which hurts the PHAs' success rates, and ultimately affects the funding allocations and budget authority (HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020)). Nonetheless, without participating landlords, this makes the tracking of spending allocated funding challenging for PHA who must monitor its per unit cost (PUC) (average monthly HAP payments) in the Voucher Management System (VMS) (HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020).

### **Present Day Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP)**

The HCVP, formerly known as "Section 8," has grown to become the most successful affordable housing program administered by HUD (Schwartz, 2015). There are approximately 3,000 PHAs in the country, and about 2,000 PHAs administer the HCVP (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019). Precisely, the HCVP is a public-private partnership between a landlord, a voucher holder, and a PHA (Schwartz, 2015, Tighe & Muller, 2013). Each stakeholder must comply with their legal obligations to subsidize the contract rent in the private rental market through one of the following contractual agreements: a) lease (landlord-voucher holder), b) voucher (voucher holder-PHA), and c) Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract (PHA-landlord) (Schwartz, 2015, Tighe & Muller, 2013).

The HCVP provides vouchers to low and moderate-income (LMI) eligible voucher holders, enabling them to lease housing in the private rental market of their choice (Schwartz, 2015, Tighe & Muller, 2013). A unit can be a single-family home (SFH), duplex, multifamily apartment, townhome, condo, single room occupancy (SRO), or mobile home (Schwartz, 2015, Tighe & Muller, 2013). Before entering into a HAP contract, the landlord's unit must successfully pass a Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspection (Ross, 2011). Each year the landlord's unit must pass an annual inspection on complying with the HAP contract to continue

receiving subsidized payments from the PHA (Ross, 2011; Schwartz, 2015, Tighe & Muller, 2013). Eligible voucher holders who qualify for the HCVP pay 30% to 40% of their adjusted monthly income (AMI) toward their housing cost and rental share for the unit they select (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013).

The PHA enters into an Annual Contributions Contract (ACC) with HUD to administer the HCVP each year and receives a federal allocation through a budget authority in funding increments (Schwartz, 2015). The HCVP is funded on a calendar year (CY) and, the PHA is paid an administrative fee to administer the HCVP on behalf of HUD through the ACC's principal-agent contract (HUD PIH Notice 2020-29). The HCVP can be administered by a local city, county, or state PHA operating within a region or jurisdiction (HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; Schwartz, 2015). The HCVP is a freedom of choice program that allows voucher holders to locate and lease privately-owned housing within the jurisdiction that operates an HCVP (HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; Schwartz, 2015). Moreover, the total number of vouchers nationally are represented in 52% of urban neighborhoods, 38% of suburban neighborhoods, and 10% of rural neighborhoods (HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019).

HUD provides 23 billion dollars in subsidy annually through the HCVP to provide housing assistance for 2.2 million households (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019). There are two types of landlords of the HCVP. First are the individual investors, which account for approximately 1.0 million units and 10 billion dollars in federal funding (HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019). Individual investors are also known as small "mom and pop" rental housing owners and typically own single-family homes (SFH) or duplexes (HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019). Some rental property owners enter property management agreements (PMAs) with private property management companies that provide property

management services for their investment properties (AREC, 2019; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019). The second type of landlords is limited liability companies (LLCs), limited partnerships (LPs), or limited liability partnerships (LLPs), which account for 1.2 million units and 13 billion dollars in federal funding (HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019). These private-sector companies are usually multifamily owners, hedge funds, and other large apartment and townhome real estate development companies (HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; Schwartz, 2015).

### **The Need for the Demand-Side Actor Landlord**

Ironically, after being passed over by the federal government to meet the supply and demand for affordable housing during the Great Depression with the passing of the Public Housing Act in 1937, the private landlord actor became the housing policy solution in 1974 to the government's failed public housing model (Desmond & Perkins, 2016; Schwartz, 2015). Unfortunately, public housing residents, voucher holders, and landlords have had to pay the price for bureaucracy for participating in the HCVP (North, 1990). The cost-benefit analysis question regarding the guaranteed rent of being an HCVP landlord, is it worth dealing with the bureaucratic red tape (Cunningham et al., 2018; Garboden, Rosen, Greif, DeLuca, & Edin, 2018; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; Nisar, Murdoch, Elgin, Vachon, and Horseman, 2018)? The guaranteed rent ("carrot on the stick") approach does not incentivize landlord participation and correlates with the phenomenon of the landlord withdrawal from the HCVP because of dealing with the PHA's bureaucratic red tape (Garboden et al., 2018; Garboden & Rosen, 2018; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; Nisar et al., 2018). These landlords can easily lease to a private market renter without dealing with the PHA's institutional bureaucracy (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; Schwartz, 2015). This phenomenon of landlords withdrawing from the HCVP has a significant correlation with the affordable housing crisis as PHAs are converting their entire portfolios to the

RAD program or Section 22 Voluntary Conversion to the HCVP initiative (HUD HCV Landlord Webinar I, 2020; HUD PIH Notice 2020-23, 2020). The RAD program allows PHAs to develop or redevelop their distressed public housing properties through private investment and leverage public housing properties and land through the Section 8 funding platform (Schwartz, 2015). Section 22 Voluntary Conversion-Asset Repositioning initiative allows PHAs to convert their subsidy from public housing to HCVP voluntarily (HUD HCV Landlord Webinar I, 2020; HUD PIH Notice 2020-23, 2020).

Furthermore, PHAs utilize the HCVP temporarily or permanently to relocate public housing residents during RAD or Section 22 Voluntary Conversion, when public housing units are demolished, new units are built, or units undergo major rehabilitation through redevelopment (HUD HCV Landlord Webinar I, 2020; HUD PIH Notice 2020-23, 2020). Regardless, PHAs depend on landlords to provide their units to meet the affordable housing demand by providing leasing options during and after displacement (Rosen, 2014). Therefore, removing the public housing stock through the RAD program and Section 22 Voluntary Conversion needs able and willing landlords to participate (HUD PIH Notice 2020-23, 2020; Rosen, 2020). Landlords are gatekeepers to affordable housing and are essential partners for transitioning public housing residents and voucher holders to the private-sector housing market (Rosen, 2014).

When landlords withdraw from the HCVP, this reduces the number of affordable housing units for current voucher holders and new voucher holders (i.e., former public housing residents) transitioning from the public housing platform (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; Rosen, 2020). These scenarios include Tenant Protection Vouchers (TPVs), which are used when public housing residents are relocated during the public housing development, redevelopment, and voluntary conversion processes (HUD PIH Notice 2020-23, 2020; Schwartz, 2015).

Consequently, there is also the dilemma of saturated rental housing markets because of the large number of housing vouchers under contract in a specific area and the competition amongst voucher holders with landlords who accept vouchers (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; McClure, 2013). Likewise, there are not enough housing units (i.e., supply) to meet the demand for voucher holders and this cause-and-effect relationship correlates with the need for landlords to participate in the HCVP (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019). However, the phenomenon of landlords withdrawing from leasing their units through the HCVP is related to institutional bureaucracy, which ultimately reduces the number of units for voucher holders (Garboden et al., 2018; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; North, 1990).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also exacerbated the phenomenon of landlords withdrawing from leasing their properties through the HCVP because of ineffective communication, poor customer service, lack of professionalism, the absence of modern-day technology, and slow inspection processes (Cunningham et al., 2018; Garboden et al., 2018; Garboden & Rosen, 2018; PHADA Advocate 12-23-2020, 2020; Rosen, 2020; Varady, Jaroscak, & Kleinhans, 2017). PHAs can utilize their Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) funding to recruit and retain landlords to participate in the HCVP based on landlord monetary incentives (HUD PIH Notice 2020-18, 2020). Although the CARES Act funding has allowed PHAs to offer landlords monetary incentives, the money will not fix the broken relationship between landlords and PHAs (PHADA Advocate 12-23-2020, 2020). Unfortunately, the brick-and-mortar neoclassical bureaucratic PHAs are not prepared to streamline their operations by utilizing the innovative flexibilities to administer the HCVP in the

21<sup>st</sup> century effectively under the CARES Act waivers (North, 1990; PHADA Advocate 12-23-2020, 2020; Threatt, 2020).

### **Purpose of Study**

The phenomenon of landlords withdrawing from participating in the HCVP requires a new paradigm that focuses on streamlining operations through technology to create institutional change (Garboden et al., 2018; Garboden & Rosen, 2018; HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; North, 1990; Rosen, 2020; Varady et al., 2017). Most of the attention and research focused on landlord investment strategies, landlord acceptance and denial of housing vouchers, and landlord experiences leasing through the HCVP (Garboden et al., 2018). Moreover, the HCVP "looks good on paper" and has not lived up to its public-private partnership design (Ferlie et al., 2005; Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013; Varady et al., 2017). This perception of institutional bureaucracy for landlords is their reality and has created this phenomenon of landlords withdrawing from their participation in the HCVP (North, 1990; Varady, 2017). Nonetheless, landlords are needed to make the HCVP successful; however, landlords feel like they do not have a voice, that they do not have anyone in their corner to support them, and no one validates their thoughts or opinions (Garboden & Rosen, 2020; Varady et al., 2017).

Furthermore, over the last decade, over 110,000 landlords have withdrawn from the HCVP, and this has negatively affected housing choices for voucher holders (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). In retrospect, this steady decline equals to approximately 10,000 landlords withdrawn each year from leasing through the HCVP (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). Specifically, from 2009 to 2016, the HCVP lost 80,000 landlords nationally as the number of landlords decreased from 775,00 to 695,000 (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). The landlords' participation in the HCVP has declined from 38.9 per 100 landlords in 2010 to 33.8 per 100



landlords in 2018 (HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; Richardson, 2019). This phenomenon of landlords withdrawing from the HCVP and choosing not to participate in the HCVP anymore because of institutional bureaucracy threatens the supply of affordable housing (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; North, 1990; Rosen, 2020).

### **Rationale for Study**

There is an affordable crisis, and the demand for affordable housing has not been as high as it is today since the New Deal during the Great Depression when the Public Housing Act of 1937 was passed (Rosen, 2020; Threatt, 2020). The landlords' phenomenon of leaving the HCVP is a catastrophe problem for the rental housing crisis that is a part of the larger affordable housing crisis (Rosen, 2020). The demand-side actor landlord plays a vital role in addressing the extensive waiting list for the HCVP, affordable housing rental shortages, and the affordable housing crisis (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). Without landlords meeting the demand for voucher holders, this theoretically reduces the number of affordable housing units for voucher holders, creates additional barriers for voucher holders to lease in low-poverty areas, and entraps voucher holders leasing in high-poverty neighborhoods only (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; McClure, 2013; Rosen, 2020).

Furthermore, the Landlord Taskforce was launched under former HUD Secretary Dr. Benjamin Carson in September 2018 to address the withdrawal phenomenon (HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). The Landlord Taskforce listening tours were held around the country in seven large metropolitan cities: Washington DC, Atlanta, GA, Fort Worth, TX, Philadelphia, PA, Los Angeles, CA, Salem, OR, and Salt Lake City, UT in September and October 2018 (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019, HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019). During the landlord breakout session in Salt City, UT, the Salt Lake City Association of

REALTORS® facilitated the listening session for landlords to solicit input on increasing participation in the HCVP, which included property managers, investors, rental property owners, and licensed REALTORS® (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). The Landlord Taskforce held listening tours over a two-month period that covered six out of the ten HUD regions, which totaled seven listening forums, four focus groups, and one virtual focus group (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019). This seven-site listening tour goal was to obtain input from landlords of why they are withdrawing or choosing not to participate in the HCVP (HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019).

Moreover, HUD held its first Landlord Symposium in December 2019 in Indianapolis, IN (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019). HUD facilitated live and virtual webinars, symposiums, and performed listening tours throughout the country from 2018 to 2020 regarding this phenomenon of the decrease in landlord participation in the HCVP (HCV Landlord Strategies Background and Introduction, 2020; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019, HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019). During the landlord breakout sessions, HUD evaluated the landlords' perceptions and attitudes toward the PHA institutional bureaucracy contributing to the landlords' withdrawal from the HCVP (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; North, 1990). Throughout the sessions, landlords expressed their reasons for withdrawing from the HCVP because of negative experiences such as: dealing with the bureaucratic red tape, burdensome administrative paperwork, slow processing, subjective HQS inspection process, laissez-faire PHA leadership, inconsistent policies, inefficient practices, incompetent staff, lack of professionalism, ineffective practices, out-of-date housing software, poor communication, lack of a direct staff person devoted to landlords, little or no support from the PHA during conflicts with voucher holders, and terrible customer service (HUD Evidence

Matters, 2019; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019). Another goal of the Landlord Task Force was to obtain feedback from landlords to develop public policy to retain and recruit landlords to address landlords' phenomenon of withdrawing and choosing not to participate in the HCVP (HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). The Landlord Taskforce's ultimate goal was to better understand the phenomenon and how institutional bureaucracy correlated with landlord departure as a demand-side actor landlord from leasing through the HCVP (HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; North, 1990). These are some of the reasons that landlords mentioned during the Landlord Taskforce events for their withdrawal from supplying affordable housing options for voucher holders (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019).

### **Problem Statement**

The problem statement is that despite the research on attracting more landlords to the HCVP, landlord acceptance and denial of housing vouchers, and landlord experiences in leasing through the HCVP. There has been minimal research focused on obtaining landlords' thoughts and opinions on streamlining the HCVP operations through technology or increasing their retention in the HCVP by removing the bureaucratic red tape. Therefore, it is a gap in the research regarding the landlord's opinions on how to streamline the HCVP operations through technology to increase their retention and implementing institutional change. Garboden, Rosen, Grief, DeLuca, and Edin (2018) indicated that research had missed the opportunity to acknowledge that the demand-side actor landlords play a significant role in supplying units for voucher holders. This dissertation research will add to the empirical knowledge base by addressing the research gap to understand better the landlords' important role and their opinions as experiential stakeholders in the HCVP. This research study will create new knowledge to

cultivate better relationships between landlords and PHAs by streamlining operations through technology to increase retention and implement institutional change to enhance the PHA's public service approach.

### **Research Question**

The research question focused on the price of bureaucracy by addressing the root cause of the phenomenon that PHAs are losing 10,000 landlords annually because of the institutional bureaucracy. The landlord's withdrawal from participating in the HCVP will require a new paradigm to address the phenomenon, focusing on institutional change. This new paradigm will need to focus on removing the negative stigma and reputation of the bureaucratic PHA. This new paradigm should also focus on making the HCVP more landlord-friendly and attractive for rental property owners, property managers, and investors. The correlation of institutional bureaucracy and the phenomenon of the great exodus of landlord withdrawal from the HCVP is why this research study is so significant for affordable housing and the field of public administration. The institutional bureaucracy creates an issue for landlords and creates problems for voucher holders because, without landlords, there are no affordable housing units to lease. The following research question was developed to address this public problem and purpose for this research study to guide this study: Do landlords think that streamlining the HCVP operations through technology will increase their retention by removing institutional bureaucracy and implementing institutional change?

After a thorough analysis of the literature and the phenomenon of landlords choosing not to participate in the HCVP, the following hypotheses were developed to answer the research question:

**Hypotheses:**

1. Hypothesis 1: Landlords agree that improving Communication through technology would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord.
2. Hypothesis 2: Landlords agree that enhancing Customer Service through technology would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord.

**Rationale for Methods**

Based on this phenomenon and the purpose of this study, the study's methodology was quantitative, and the research approach was descriptive statistics. The study utilized an online Qualtrics designed and administered, closed-ended survey. The online survey was sent through email over two weeks to obtain input from landlords at the Dothan Housing Authority (DHA). The emailed online survey link was sent twice (a week directly behind each other), consisting of an initial sending week and a reminder week. The online survey investigated the opinions of landlords of the DHA who had an active HAP contract and had been a landlord for at least a year regarding streamlining operations of the HCVP through technology to increase their retention. Surveying landlords who have at least one year of experience leasing their units at the DHA through the HCVP with an active HAP contract will add empirical knowledge of how to improve this public-private partnership (Newton & Rudestam, 2015). This research study will address the knowledge gap to understand how this demand-side actor landlord feels about streamlining operations of the HCVP through technology to retain their participation. The rationale for the quantitative study using descriptive statistics and the survey technique is cost-effective to obtain the opinions and thoughts from landlords to improve the HCVP operations to keep them satisfied. Additionally, the survey methodology creates a way to collect and analyze a portion of the landlords' larger population.

## Significance of Study

The study's significance analyzes the price of bureaucracy from a multifaceted perspective of landlords' growing phenomenon of withdrawing from the HCVP altogether. The PHA is extrinsically focused on being a "high performer" through the HUD Section Eight Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) annual performance evaluation tool. This satisfice decision is based on maintaining its administrative fee funding from HUD at the expense of relationships with landlords (Ricucci, 2010; Varady et al., 2013; Varady et al., 2017). This is a paramount issue of trying to meet the regulatory requirements of the HCVP while also keeping landlords engaged and satisfied (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). This must be done by removing the institutional bureaucracy that has led to landlords withdrawing from the HCVP (North, 1990). In contrast, the bureaucratic red tape is a part of the neoclassical institution bureaucracy's design that the PHA establishes to meet the HUD mandates to continue receiving federal funding to provide administrative oversight for the HCVP (North 1990; Ricucci, 2010). The institutional bureaucracy organizational culture creates the antagonist relationship for this public-private partnership and is the exact problem that causes landlords to remove their units from the HCVP (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; North, 1990; Varady et al., 2017).

Unfortunately, PHAs and landlords do not naturally speak the same language, and have different agendas with different actors, creates an indifferent relationship from the beginning (Threatt, 2019; Varady et al., 2017). Although rent is guaranteed for landlords who lease through the HCVP, landlords are not interested in participating, do not want to deal with the cost of the bureaucracy of working with the PHA (Garboden et al., 2018; Nisar et al., 2018; North, 1990). Current research lacks focusing on the landlords' opinions and their thoughts on increasing their retention in the HCVP (Garboden et al., 2018; Garboden & Rosen, 2018). This study will obtain

landlord opinions on how to retain their participation by streamlining operations through technology. This is why this research is so significant to add knowledge to this growing phenomenon and the field of public administration (Newton & Rudestam, 2015; Riccucci, 2010).

There are certain pain points that landlords express when dealing with the PHA and leasing through the HCVP based on the deeply flawed program (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; Zuberi, 2019). Not only can these pain points be alleviated, but they can also be removed by developing strategies to cultivate better relationships for this public-private partnership between the PHA and landlords (Garboden & Rosen, 2018; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019). By removing institutional bureaucracy through streamlining operations through the following: enhancing customer service through a responsive website, investing in technology by creating a landlord portal, utilizing web-based software and web-based forms, text message alerts, making payments through direct deposits, implementing a marketing and outreach campaign; improving communication through landlord email addresses, phone numbers, walk-in days, and newsletters (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; Schwartz, 2015). Additionally, the bureaucracy can be removed by facilitating landlord orientation and training workshops, providing monetary incentives (e.g., signing bonuses, security deposit assistance, vacancy loss payments, & damage protection funds), simplifying the inspections process, hiring a full-time landlord liaison, conducting conflict resolution for tenant-landlord disputes, hosting landlord engagement events, and establishing a landlord advisory committee (Cunningham et al., 2018; HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020; North, 1990; Richardson, 2019).

A landlord population leaving the HCVP has been the small "mom and pop" landlords who have decided to withdraw from the HCVP because of negative experiences because of institutional bureaucracy (HUD Landlords & Vouchers, 2019; Nisar et al., 2018; Zuberi, 2019). Some of these property managers utilize the HCVP as a business strategy to provide residential property management services base on the guaranteed rent (Garboden et al., 2018; Varady et al., 2017). Explicitly as it relates to this study, there is a 10% property management fee charge of the contract rent in the State of Alabama (AREC, 2019). In Alabama, if the contract rent is \$1,000.00, the property management company makes \$100.00 monthly for providing property management services to the rental housing owner (AREC, 2019). The property management fee supports the property management company's business model (Varady et al., 2013; Varady et al., 2013). If the rental property owners of these properties withdraw from the HCVP, this ultimately affects the property management's company business, business strategy, and return on investment (Rosen, 2020; Varady et al., 2013; Varady et al., 2017).

Furthermore, many individual and large investors assign their properties to property management companies based on the economies of scale (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; Varady et al., 2013, Varady et al., 2017). Rental property owners utilize the economies of scale model by working with property management companies who have experience navigating the terrains of the HCVP to provide leasing services for investment properties (Rosen, 2020; Varady et al., 2013; Varady et al., 2017). Leasing through the HCVP comes with bureaucratic red tape for rental property owners (Garboden et al., 2018; Rosen, 2020). Landlords utilize the cost-benefit analysis of the guaranteed rent for return on investment by working with property management companies for their investment properties (Garboden et al., 2018; Rosen, 2020). The property management company enters into a property management



agreement through a principal-agent relationship with the rental housing owner (AREC, 2019; Ferlie et al., 2005; Varady et al., 2013). Specifically, as it relates to this study, the state of Alabama requires a leasing agent or a property manager to have a real estate salesperson license issued by the Alabama Real Estate Commission (AREC) (AREC, 2019). The owners of property management companies must have a real estate broker's license through the AREC (AREC, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic left smaller "mom and pop" landlords out of the CARES Act funding made matters worse (PHADA Advocate 12-23-2020, 2020). The challenge of landlord retention to lease through the HCVP exacerbated the phenomenon of landlord withdrawal because of the slow processing, negative customer service, and poor communication of providing timely updates of CARES Act funding (Cunningham et al., 2018; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; PHADA Advocate 12-23-2020, 2020). The moratorium on eviction from the CARES Act and the recent Center for Disease Control (CDC) moratorium has created additional hardships for landlords (PHADA Advocate 12-23-2020, 2020). Landlords continue to evaluate their rental portfolio from a cost-benefit analysis and whether continuing to lease through the HCVP is worth it (PHADA Advocate 12-23-2020, 2020).

### **Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a basic overview of the study by establishing a foundation to address the study's research problem. To begin this chapter, a discussion of the background overview and purpose of the study was introduced, the rationale for the study, problem statement, research questions, rationale for methods, and the study's significance to create a preliminary understanding of the phenomenon. The study's goal was to obtain landlords' thoughts and opinions of ways to streamline operations of the HCVP through technology to

increase their retention and implement institutional change. Although HUD has created a Landlord Taskforce to investigate this phenomenon by exploring why landlords choose not to lease through the HCVP. The Landlord Taskforce was also created to analyze policy solutions by creating counteractive strategies to retain landlords. Nonetheless, there is a gap in the research to obtain landlords' input on improving the HCVP operations to retain their participation. This phenomenon of the landlords withdrawing from the HCVP and choosing not to participate in the HCVP because of institutional bureaucracy threatens the supply of affordable housing.

This study provided the opportunity to create policy solutions by obtaining landlord opinions through surveys of ways to streamline the HCVP operations through technology by improving communications and enhancing customer service of the Dothan Housing Authority (DHA). Landlords play a paramount role in the rental housing market by providing voucher-holders units to lease (Rosen, 2020). Therefore, landlords should also play a significant role in creating policy solutions as demand-side actors to address the phenomenon of their departure from participating in the HCVP (Rosen, 2020). This research study will ultimately initiate a return on investment for federal funding and increase public service by developing a better public-private partnership between PHAs and landlords by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the HCVP.

Landlords were excellent respondents for this quantitative study which this demand-side actor has been overlooked in previous research from obtaining their thoughts and opinions about the HCVP operations (Garboden et al., 2018). Understanding the landlords' attitude toward retaining their participation in the HCVP brought light to the phenomenon and will help create future public policy solution alternatives to remove institutional bureaucracy (Newton & Rudestam, 2015; Riccucci, 2010). This objective collection of survey data will help

create empirical knowledge and understanding of how to cultivate better relationships between the PHAs and the landlords and keep landlords satisfied and engaged with their participation in the HVCP. This objective analysis of landlords' opinions, thoughts, and attitudes on how to streamline the operations of the HCVP through technology to increase their retention by removing the bureaucratic red tape will ultimately add to the empirical knowledge of how to solve this public problem and address this affordable housing phenomenon.

Chapter 2 focuses on the study's review of relevant literature and its theoretical framework. Chapter 3 focuses on the study's methodology and research design. Chapter 4 focuses on the study's findings, data analysis, and interrater reliability. Chapter 5 focuses on the study's summary, discussion of the results, limitations, recommendations, and implications for future educational research.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

The unintended consequences of the price of bureaucracy that stems from the neoclassical PHA institution have led to landlords withdrawing from leasing through the HCVP over the past decade (Garboden, Rosen, Deluca, & Edin, 2018; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; North, 1990). The PHA neoclassical model's bureaucracy deters landlord recruitment and retention, which affects the "choice" in the HCVP for voucher holders (North, 1990). The landlord's withdrawal from participating in the HCVP will require a new paradigm to address the phenomenon, focusing on institutional change (Garboden et al., 2018; North, 1990; Riccucci, 2010; Varady, Jaroscak, & Kleinhans, 2017). Thus, the PHA institution's economic performance and sustainability are based on its capability to evolve (Denhardt, Denhardt, & Blanc, 2014; North, 1990). The nexus for institutional change is required to retain the demand-side landlord to continue participating in the HCVP and for the PHA's evolution to streamline their operations through technology (Cunningham et al., 2018; HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; North, 1990).

The future of affordable housing depends on the success of the HCVP, and the future of the HCVP depends on landlords (Garboden et al., 2018; Varady et al., 2017). The PHA must embrace the evolution and change its operations from the neoclassical supply-side public housing actor to the principal-agent actor (principal) under this public-private partnership model in the HCVP (Ferlie, Lynn & Pollitt, 2005; North, 1990). The PHA must have an excellent working relationship with its partner, the landlord, in the public-private partnership of the HCVP for program success (Garboden et al., 2018; Garboden & Rosen, 2018). The PHA has entered

into a contract with the demand-side actor landlord to provide affordable housing options that require an efficient platform that mirrors the private rental market (Ferlie et al., 2005; Schwartz, 2015). Additionally, current research indicates that the landlords are no longer interested in the HCVP because of past negative experiences with the HCVP, emphasizing the lack of technology, communication, customer service, and inspections (Garboden et al., 2018; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; Varady et al. 2017).

This dissertation analyzed three focus areas to explain the nexus of a new paradigm that includes landlord retention efforts through streamlining operations of the HCVP. First, a discussion on why investing in technology is vital to streamlining operations to increase landlord retention and implement institutional change. Second, a discussion on why enhancing customer service is paramount to streamlining operations to increase landlord retention and implement institutional change. Third, a discussion on why improving communication plays a significant role in streamlining operations to increase landlord retention and implementing institutional change. This research study seeks to validate the theory of institutional change by surveying landlord participants to obtain their input of ways to streamline operations through technology to retain their participation in the HCVP. This literature review provides an overview of the research to illustrate why a new paradigm is necessary to address the landlord withdrawal phenomenon and retain landlord participation in the HCVP.

This chapter provides a review of literature, a background overview, provides applicable research on investing in technology, enhancing customer service, and improving communication as ways to streamline HCVP operations to increase landlord retention and implement institutional change. This chapter also reviewed other relevant literature such as housing policy reform, collaborative governance, and the extrinsically motivated bureaucracy of

the PHA. Finally, this chapter examined the institutional change theory's theoretical framework and how this correlated with the nexus for retaining landlords to continue participating in the HCVP by streamlining operations of the Dothan Housing Authority (DHA) through technology.

### **Review of Literature**

The literature review for this quantitative research study on HCVP landlords focused on the ideas and concepts related to two subgroups, which are: a) landlord withdrawal: public housing authority bureaucracy, administrative burdensome paperwork, red tape, delayed payments, slow inspections process, public-private partnership, inconsistent policies, inefficient practices, incompetent staff, lack of professionalism, out-of-date housing software, ineffective communication, landlord investment strategy, landlord business goals, guaranteed rent, profitability, cost-benefit analysis, and low payment standards; b) landlord retention: streamlining operations, investing in technology, improving communication, enhancing customer service, simplifying inspections, online landlord portal, landlord incentives, landlord motivations, landlord liaison, landlord newsletter, landlord advisory committee, direct deposit, public housing authority website, web-based forms, electronic signatures, landlord payments, real-time inspections portal, online orientation, and virtual training workshop.

The literature began with a broad search using Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, West Chester University Pennsylvania (WCUPA) library, and other online search databases; this created a comprehensive review of the literature contiguous to the research problem. The strategic research plan was designed to search terms, and their associations were submitted into diverse online databases. These terminologies took into account the following: "landlords," "PHA bureaucracy," "landlord retention," "landlord marketing," "landlord recruitment," "landlord withdrawal," "HCVP operations," "PHA officials," "Section Eight Management

Assessment Program (SEMAP)," "HCVP staff," "landlord portal," "landlord webpage," "PHA web-based forms," "red tape," "landlord outreach," "landlord frustration," "landlord perception," "direct deposit," "PHA technology," "landlord attitude," "Section 8," "housing assistance payment (HAP) contract," "administrative burden," "landlord frustration," "rental housing crisis," "vouchers," "housing software," "Fair Market Rent (FMR)" "rent reasonableness," landlord withdrawal," "housing choice voucher program (HCVP)," "communication," "housing quality standard (HQS)," "payment standards," "public-private partnerships." and "customer service ."

These word lists yielded studies pertinent to this research design's problem and research question. This literature review emphasized relevant research that was relevant to the study.

### **Background Overview**

Although the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) initially proposed an administratively feasible rental housing certificate program to meet the supply and demand of affordable housing, in 1937, this policy solution was turned down (Desmond & Perkins, 2016). However, the same year in 1937, the Public Housing Act authorized the federal government to create local PHAs to build public housing units to meet the supply and demand of affordable housing instead of the proposed rental housing certificate program by NAR (Desmond & Perkins, 2016; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). Likewise, NAR has always oppose public housing being developed by the federal government for fear of institutional bureaucracy entering the real estate market (Tighe & Mueller, 2013). Members of NAR (include landlords, investors, property managers, rental housing owners, and REALTORS®) viewed public housing as an institution that creates barriers to their profitability and bureaucracy to bringing down the housing market (Desmond & Perkins, 2016). NAR was also afraid of creating two housing markets, a dual

housing market that would ultimately affect the "return on investment" of its members and the private real estate market (Haines & Green, 2008).

During the 1960s, the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was created as a branch of the federal government. During the same period, HUD authorized local PHAs to lease privately-owned properties through a tenant-based rental assistance (TBRA) program called the Section 23 Leased program (Desmond & Perkins, 2016; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). The Section 23 Leased Program allowed PHAs to function as social entrepreneurs to acquire and rehab properties to lease and was highly accepted by the community (Tighe & Mueller, 2013). Tighe and Mueller (2013) explained that Nixon's Moratorium of 1973 created a paradigm shift in housing policy that moved from a public supply-side program to a private demand-side program that included private landlords. Subsequently, in 1973 HUD launched the Experimental Housing Allowance Program (EHAP) (Desmond & Perkins, 2016; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). The EHAP was designed not to inflate the housing market but to improve housing quality and lower rent burdens (Tighe & Mueller, 2013).

The Section 8 certificate program was enacted as part of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, which served as an amendment to the U.S. Housing Act of 1937, creating the nickname "Section 8" program (Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). These changes formed a relationship-oriented public-private partnership between the PHA and the private landlord (Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). Afterward, in 1983, HUD created the Freestanding Voucher Program that resembled the present-day HCVP (Desmond & Perkins, 2016; Schwartz, 2015). The present-day HCVP was created with the passage of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act (QHWRA) in 1998 (Desmond & Perkins, 2016; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). The QHWRA phased out the old Section 8 certificate and voucher



programs and combined them into one program, the HCVP (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; Schwartz, 2015).

The HCVP has continued to go through significant changes to transform the program into a more "landlord and tenant" friendly program, which is very similar to the private rental market model (Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). The HCVP has more advantages and benefits than the old certificate and voucher programs based on the strong public-private partnership that allows PHAs to implement innovative and flexible policies and practices (Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). This paradigm shift evolved from the government depending on local PHAs to build public housing units to relying on landlords through public- private partnerships of the HCVP to meet the affordable housing demand through principal- agent contracts (Tighe & Mueller, 2013).

### **Investing in Technology**

Although the HCVP is complex and confusing, one of the primary reasons for the voucher program's success is its flexibility (Schwartz, 2015). However, even the most successful PHAs encounter challenges in operating the HCVP efficiently and timely (Schwartz, 2015). The biggest concern and challenge to overcome is the substantial reduction in administrative fees (Schwartz, 2015). HUD's failure to provide adequate administrative fees significantly impede and disrupt HCVP operations and have a negative effect on the accomplishment of agency priorities and goals (Schwartz, 2015). Therefore, there is an essential need to invest in technology to streamline operations based on the lack of HUD funding (Cunningham et al., 2018; HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020).

## **Modern-day Housing Software**

The changing voucher funding climate compels PHAs to be more cost-effective and to use modern-day housing software for efficiency to improve communication and enhance customer service (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020). Schwartz (2015) explains that the PHA institution has been reluctant and apprehensive about investing in the latest technologies. This includes purchasing the latest property management software that the private sector utilizes to manage their different housing portfolios (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; Schwartz, 2015). Schwartz (2015) further explains that without modern-day housing software to administer the HCVP, it is challenging to maintain a responsive landlord relationship and nearly impossible to keep landlords engaged and satisfied.

Investing in technology would allow the PHA to create the momentum and synergy to provide a seamless transition of the paradigm shift of embracing a 21st-century technological approach of providing affordable housing services by a) moving from paper to the cloud, b) doing more with less, and c) moving from outputs to outcomes (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; Threatt, 2020). Investing in technology would also allow the PHA to incorporate dashboards to track metrics, outcomes, trends, and other key performance indicators (KPIs) (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; Threatt, 2020). This would enable the PHA to track the performance of the HCVP but simultaneously monitor inputs, outputs, and outcomes of landlord retention and recruitment efforts (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; Threatt, 2020).

## **PHA Websites**

Many PHAs have websites but lack a webpage devoted to landlords (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020). Most HCVP webpages on PHA

websites are focused on voucher holders (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020). For PHAs that have websites, they lack a responsive website and online platform for landlords to submit web-based forms that allow landlords to sign, complete, and submit transactions electronically without coming into the office (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020;). These same PHA websites do not have a landlord portal where owners can view direct deposit payments, inspection information, an online newsletter, and submit documents electronically to effectively communicate with the HCVP staff (Cunningham et al., 2018; HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020). As it relates to an online newsletter, many PHAs do not have an electronic newsletter; therefore, many times, landlords are out of the loop of updates on policies, practices, and incentives that are needed to operate a successful rental housing business (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020; Varady et al., 2017).

### **Digital Rebranding**

Also, PHAs should consider creating a digital rebranding and marketing initiative to create positive experiences for landlords to showcase there is no legitimate difference of leasing through the HCVP than the private rental market (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; HUD Landlord Listening Tour, 2018; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). A 21<sup>st</sup>-century approach to administering the HCVP is needed to create innovation, effectiveness, and efficiency through the rebranding of the HCVP (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). This will help the PHA remove the "Section 8" stigma by adding new landlords and rejuvenating current or past landlords to participate in the HCVP (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). A

rebranded HCVP that focuses on aggressive landlord marketing and outreach plan can significantly expand the options available to voucher holders and improve holders' success in finding affordable housing along with improving the success rates for PHA performance measures (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020; Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013).

## **Enhancing Customer Service**

### **The Price of Bureaucracy**

Renting to voucher holders comes with the price of dealing with the numerous layers of red tape and "peeling back the onion" of a daunting neoclassical institutional bureaucracy for a guaranteed rental payment (Garboden, Rosen, Greif, DeLuca, & Edin, 2018; Rosen, 2020).

There are multiple pain points for landlords, such as the HQS inspections, HAP contracts, other administrative burdens, poor customer service, ineffective communication, and lack of a staff position (landlord liaison) devoted to working with landlords as their point of contact (Freeman & Li, 2012; HCV Landlord Symposium; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). Some of the problems include low payment standards, denial of rent increases, administrative burdensome paperwork, bureaucratic lease-up, and inspections processes are systemic challenges with recruiting and retaining landlords for the HCVP (Freeman & Li, 2012; Varady et al., 2017). A significant impediment that deters landlords from participating in the HCVP is the confusing and bureaucratic administrative policies and practices of PHAs (DeLuca, Edin, & Owens, 2012; Freeman & Li, 2012; Rosen, 2014). DeLuca et al. (2012) emphasized that PHAs have negative reputations for slow, late, or incorrect payments and delayed rent increases. Incompetent staff, laissez-faire leadership, and slow processes enhance the bad reputations for PHA and are some of the reasons for landlords withdrawing from participating in the HCVP (DeLuca et al., 2012).

Some property management companies, and other private landlords sort voucher holders based on which PHAs administer the voucher based on their reputations (Tighe & Mueller, 2013; Rosen, 2014). Landlords are selective when working with PHAs with bad reputations (Tighe & Mueller, 2013). In contrast, a landlord may choose to lease a property in an impoverished neighborhood to a PHA's voucher holder with a bad reputation that operates an institutional bureaucratic model (Freeman & Li, 2012; Varady et al., 2013). Likewise, a landlord may lease another property in a high-opportunity neighborhood to a PHA's voucher holder with a good reputation that operates an institutional changed modern-day model (Freeman & Li, 2012; Varady et al., 2013).

Removing the bureaucracy was a top motivating factor that landlords illustrated to keep them satisfied and retain their participation during the landlord listening tours (HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019). The landlords' negative experiences resulted from lack of support during inspections for tenant-caused damages, the lengthy lease-up process from voucher issuance to approved HAP contract signing, and other administrative delays of the PHA (HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019). Some PHAs do not make it any better because of their staff's poor customer service, communication capacity, and how their operations are set-up under a neoclassical institutional bureaucratic model (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; North, 1990).

Improved and expedited inspections and streamlined processes for signing contracts online would encourage broader participation and retention of landlords (Cunningham et al., 2018; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). PHAs should create and implement innovative practices to become better partners with landlords by removing the institutional bureaucracy through the following: enhancing customer service, investing in technology, improving communication, offering

training workshops, monetary incentives, and streamlining the inspections process (Cunningham et al., 2018; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019).

### **Increase Payment Standards to Recruit Landlords**

The payment standard is the combination of rent and utilities, which equals the fair market rent (FMR). The local PHAs have the discretion to set payment standards between 90% and 110% of the FMR in a metropolitan area and up to 120% of the FMR for certain situations (McClure, 2013; Schwartz, 2015). The HCVP also allows PHAs to create different payment standards in the same metropolitan area (Schwartz, 2015). The amount of FMR is a significant issue that deters landlords from participating in the HCVP (Rosen, 2014). Landlords are not willing to invest in high-opportunity areas or move voucher holders into higher-opportunity areas without a substantial increase in fair market rent (payment standards) (Rosen, 2014).

Some landlords are more willing to work with PHAs who have Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMR) policies (Patterson & Silverman, 2018). HUD issued its final rule for implementing the SAFMR in 2016, and a new rule was later implemented in mandatory areas in 2018 (Patterson & Silverman, 2018). The SAFMR increases the fair market rent in the high-opportunity area compared to the high-poverty area to attract landlords to lease to voucher holders and to improve the cost-effectiveness of the HCVP (Patterson & Silverman, 2018). PHAs can use SAFMR to market and attract landlords in low-poverty areas to participate in the HCVP based on market-rate payment standards (HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; Patterson & Silverman, 2018). Besides, SAFMR creates housing choices that enhance the success of voucher holders in high opportunity areas that provide access to jobs, excellent schools, healthcare, a healthy environment, healthy foods, safe neighborhoods, and transportation services (Patterson & Silverman, 2018). The most cost-effective mechanism to enhance housing options for voucher

holders is to increase the payment standards that match the fair market rents in high-opportunity areas (Schwartz, 2015; Patterson & Silverman, 2018).

The Creating Move to Opportunity (CMTO) study was created to build upon the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) from 1998 to address landlord engagement and to expedite the lease-up process with faster processing, create a damage fund, and enhance outreach to landlords (Bergman, et al., 2020). The results of the CMTO illustrate that voucher holders of the treatment group who received mobility services moved to high-opportunity areas compared to the control group who received traditional voucher services (Bergman, et al., 2020). The CMTO also illustrated that voucher holders moved to better neighborhoods, expanded housing choices for voucher holders in areas of opportunity, and helped PHAs with its deconcentration goals by adding new landlords to participate in the HCVP (Bergman, et al., 2020; McClure, 2013; Rosen, 2014; Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013).

### **Hiring a Full-Time Landlord Liaison**

The landlord liaison staff position is the single point of contact for landlords devoted solely to provide customer service and communication for this stakeholder regarding their units or any updates regarding the PHA's HCVP (Cunningham et al., 2018; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). Cunningham et al. (2018) explained that recruiting and retaining landlords should be performed by the landlord liaison position. Unfortunately, many PHAs choose not to fund the landlord liaison position because they do not understand its importance for recruiting and retaining the demand-side actor (Cunningham et al., 2018). Cunningham et al. (2018) indicated that only a small amount of PHAs have the landlord liaison position budgeted on their HCVP staff.

In contrast, having a landlord liaison staff person could be the difference in a landlord choosing to lease their units through the HCVP or withdrawing from participating in the HCVP (Cunningham et al., 2018; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). A landlord liaison could also be utilized to recruit landlords in a low-poverty area and market to rental housing owners in areas of opportunities that would have never considered leasing through the HCVP (Cunningham et al., 2018; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). An innovative approach that PHAs should consider is to utilize the landlord liaison services such as artificial intelligence (AI), software, an answering service, or an application (App) as a mechanism to improve communication and enhance customer service (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019).

Varady, Wang, Murphy, and Stahlke (2013) affirmed that the landlord liaison is needed to cultivate better relationships with landlords. This position will play an essential role in helping landlords feel like they are actual customers of the HCVP (Varady et al., 2013). Many landlords feel that there should be one designated person (landlord liaison) dedicated to working with them (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; Varady et al., 2013). The landlord liaison position would play an instrumental role in changing the perceptions and attitudes of landlords through their retention, recruitment, and support efforts (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). Ultimately, the landlord liaison position is essential to assisting the PHA with improving this public-private partnership's relationship and for the HCVP to live up to its intended purpose (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). Therefore, PHAs should budget for a landlord liaison position who would be the landlord contact person for the HCVP (Cunningham et al., 2018).



## **Simplifying the Inspections Process**

Simplifying the inspections process through technology is an essential step to streamlining the operations of the HCVP to increase landlord retention by implementing institutional change (Cunningham et al., 2018; HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). The HCVP inspection process has become too complicated for current landlords to navigate, deters new landlords from participating, and causing current landlords to withdraw (HCV Evidence Matters, 2019; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020). The administrative burdensome inspection process of waiting on inspectors to inspect landlords' units is a huge deterrence (Cunningham et al., 2018; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). To add to the deterrence, the delay of waiting to find out results through the mail of whether an inspection passed or failed, or if the HAP payment will continue or stop without knowing the inspection status for days or weeks at a time (Cunningham et al., 2018; HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019).

The landlords sit and wait on the mail, hoping that the mail makes it to them in time or if the mail comes at all to make a business decision (Cunningham et al., 2018; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). This is an extreme hardship for any landlord to operate their HCVP business without "real-time" inspection results and other pertinent information (Cunningham et al., 2018; HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020). This significant issue of waiting for a mailed HAP payment because the PHA has not embraced a technological environment is a root cause of the landlord withdrawal phenomenon based on the neoclassical bureaucratic model (Cunningham et al., 2018; North, 1990). This same model has caused the PHA to choose status quo operations and sacrifice the relationship with landlords to pursue continued funding and meet HUD mandates (Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013).

The institutional bureaucratic inspections process can be daunting for any landlords and devastating to their business operations (Cunningham et al., 2018; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). However, some landlords and investors are still interested in the HCVP based on their cost-benefit analysis of the inspection process (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; Rosen, 2020). The vacancy waiting period is too long between a unit's inspections and getting a unit under a HAP contract because the PHA's bureaucracy is terrible for any landlords' business (Cunningham et al., 2018; Garboden et al., 2018; HCV Landlord Strategies Background and Introduction, 2020). Furthermore, this is a catalyst that creates hardships for voucher holders who have to move because landlords refuse to make timely repairs out of spite of having to deal with the PHA's institutional bureaucracy (DeLuca et al., 2012). This cause-and-effect scenario affects families' stability with children, disabled individuals, veterans, and elderly households who have to move abruptly (DeLuca et al., 2012; Desmond & Perkins, 2016). This puts the voucher holder at risk of being displaced, evicted, or lose their housing voucher because landlords refuse to deal with the PHA's institutional bureaucracy (DeLuca et al., 2012; Desmond & Perkins, 2016).

The PHA's bureaucratic agenda of meeting HUD mandates should not slow down the inspections process and create hardships for landlords or voucher holders (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020). The PHA can address communications issues regarding the inspection process by investing in technology that creates automation through text messaging, emails, and phone calls (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020). This would improve communication between the landlord and the PHA and enhance the customer service of the PHA simultaneously (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020).

Many PHAs are still using carbon copies for the HQS Inspectors (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020). Moreover, the HQS Inspector has to drive to the unit, complete the unit inspection on the carbon copy form, and at the end of the day, return to the PHA's site, either manual type or upload the information into the housing software (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020). Next, an HQS Inspection Clerk has to manually type and mail a letter regarding the inspection results instead of a modern-day housing software that would automatically create and upload the results letter to the online inspections portal (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020). Furthermore, the inspection process could be completed efficiently on a tablet or smartphone utilizing modern-day housing software to upload real-time inspection results to meet HUD mandates and simplify the inspection process by making it landlord-friendly and informative (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020).

## **Improving Communication**

### **Social Media**

Utilizing social media is a creative way to streamline operations through technology by improving communications efforts that will lead to landlord satisfaction and engagement to sustain their leasing through the HCVP (Cunningham et al., 2018; HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020). Utilizing social media posts such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram can keep landlords informed of time-sensitive announcements in real-time (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020). Social media is an alternative method to communicate and engage with the landlords effectively besides emails and telecommunication to retain the experiential stakeholder participation in the HCVP (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020). PHAs should implement a 21<sup>st</sup>-century approach of communication to attract and retain

landlords through traditional and innovative techniques such as online newsletters, virtual rental fairs, virtual landlord training workshops, videos, blogs, podcasts, and social media posts (Varady et al., 2017; HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020).

### **Landlord Engagement and Satisfaction**

Landlords evaluate the cost of bureaucracy in the midst of dealing with the slow-processing bureaucratic PHA while maintaining a mortgage, paying for property taxes, and other fees or charges associated with maintaining a rental property in the HCVP compared to leasing to a private renter without the associated institutional bureaucracy (Rosen, 2020; Varady et al., 2017). The landlord withdrawal phenomenon leads to the question, is it worth leasing through the HCVP, even if financial incentives and guaranteed rent are involved (Cunningham et al., 2018; Freeman & Li, 2012; Nisar et al., 2018; Varady et al., 2017). Varady et al. (2017) explain that communication problems are a significant issue for this principal-agent relationship between the PHA and the landlord. Some landlords feel like they do not have a voice, their opinions are ignored, and their feelings of dissatisfaction are not validated (Varady et al., 2017).

Without effective communication, this public-private partnership between the PHA and demand-side actors will continue to deteriorate (Varady et al., 2017). Unfortunately, many landlords do not feel supported, engaged, and are dissatisfied overall with the HCVP and the PHA (Garboden et al., 2018). There are too many times that landlords feel by themselves, and landlords feel that they do not have anyone in their corner to support them (Garboden et al., 2018). Therefore, this public-private partnership appears to be two-sided instead of a three-way partnership because of the support that the landlord does not receive compared to the PHA and the voucher holder (Garboden et al., 2018; Varady et al., 2017).

Varady, Jaroscak, and Kleinhans (2017) suggest that engaging landlords with surveys and questionnaires through listening to their issues regarding the red tape, bureaucracy, and what discourages them from participating is a way to develop better relationships. Landlords will need to know that they are supported and that their opinions and feelings matter as they evaluate a cost-benefit analysis legitimately of whether to continue participating in the HCVP (Garboden et al., 2018). The PHA can significantly expand housing opportunities available to voucher holders by continuously recruiting new landlords to participate in the HCVP (Garboden et al., 2018; McClure, 2013; Varady et al., 2017). PHAs should focus the same amount of energy or more to retain current landlords through engagement by listening to their concerns about removing the bureaucratic red tape (Varady et al., 2017). This will create landlord satisfaction and help retain the demand-side actors' participation to meet the affordable housing demand for voucher holders (Varady et al., 2017).

For the HCVP to live up to its intended purpose of "housing choice" for voucher holders, it will require developing stronger relationships with landlords (Varady et al., 2017). This public-private partnership relationship is essential to the success of the HCVP and expanding housing opportunities for voucher holders (Garboden et al., 2018; McClure, 2013). Varady et al. (2017) indicated that landlord engagement should involve newsletters, educational workshops, appreciation events, and advisory committees to increase landlord satisfaction to retain their participation in the HCVP. This should be done by creating a landlord advisory committee that would play a significant role in shaping policies and practices of the HCVP that would be essential to recruiting and retaining landlords (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019).

## **Speaking the Same Language**

PHAs and landlords do not naturally speak the same language (HCV Landlord Education and Outreach Strategies, 2020; Threatt, 2019). The PHA is concerned with meeting the Section Eight Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) mandates to continue receiving the extrinsically motivating funding of the Annual Contributing Contract's (ACC's) administrative fee (Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). Likewise, landlords are focused on meeting the affordable housing demand to receive the extrinsically motivated HAP contract payment (Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). In the HCVP, developing and nurturing this public-private partnership's relationship by providing stellar customer service and effectively communicating is paramount to retaining landlord participation (Varady et al., 2017). The relationship between the landlord, tenant, and PHA is not always an enjoyable one, and way too often, it is a very contentious relationship filled with mistrust, misunderstanding, and unreasonable demands and expectations (Varady et al., 2017). Unfortunately, the relationship is somewhat naturally strained from the start because each member of the public-private partnership comes to the relationship with different agendas, motives, and objectives (Varady et al., 2017).

## **Landlord Training**

Landlords often enter the HCVP blindly and have little to no knowledge of how the program works (HCV Landlord Education and Outreach Strategies, 2020; Threatt, 2019). In the HCVP, knowledge is power; the more education a landlord has, the more power the landlord has in making informed decisions (HCV Landlord Education and Outreach Strategies, 2020; Threatt, 2019). Many landlords are inexperienced in property management, and landlord training would be useful beyond clarifying the PHA's role and landlord's role related to property management and voucher management (Garboden et al., 2018; Threatt, 2019; Varady et al., 2013). The best

practice for landlords participating in the HCVP is to be educated about the landlord's role as the property manager or rental housing owner related to the lease, between them and the voucher holder, and the HAP contract between the landlord and the PHA (Threatt, 2019). Unfortunately, one of the biggest misconceptions of the HCVP for landlords is that the PHA is the landlord's property manager (Threatt, 2019). Likewise, the landlord assumes that the PHA enforces the lease, and the landlord sits back, ready to receive the HAP payment (Threatt, 2019). Furthermore, landlords felt that they gleaned more from the property management workshops facilitated by real estate professionals than the landlord orientations and seminars facilitated by the HCVP staff of the PHA (Threatt, 2019; Varady et al., 2017).

### **Perception is Reality for Landlords**

Tighe and Mueller (2013) suggested that landlord resistance is a huge problem. Tighe and Mueller (2013) explained that some potential landlords might doubt whether the voucher holders will be good tenants and whether the HCVP bureaucracy will prevent them from rejecting unqualified applicants or evicting problem tenants. There is a lot of inaccurate information regarding how the HCVP works where first-time landlords, investors, and veteran landlords get from adverse sources such as those who have had negative experiences that deter recruitment and retention efforts (Tighe & Mueller, 2013). Some potential landlords are also hesitant to rent to voucher holders because of the stigmas and stereotypes associated with the HCVP, formerly the name "Section 8" (Tighe & Mueller, 2013). These same landlords are aware of the bureaucracy, administrative burdensome red tape, and the reputation of local PHAs that prevent them from leasing to voucher holders (Tighe & Mueller, 2013).

Additionally, the issue of inspections, rent reasonableness, advertising for available units, burdensome paperwork, amounts for payment standards, past negative experience, and lack of

customer service from the PHA to address questions or complaints are serious problems that deter potential landlords from participating in the HCVP (Tighe & Mueller, 2013). Tighe and Mueller (2013) affirmed that PHAs who have a reputation for being slow and antiquated in expediting HQS inspections, executing HAP contracts, making direct deposit payments, and responding to customer service requests have problems with recruiting and retaining landlords.

### **Relevant Research**

Garboden and Rosen (2018) conducted an ethnographic study to gather a systematic data collection from a random sample of landlords, property managers, and developers' voices and their motivations to participate in the HCVP. The data collection included interviews with 150 landlords and property managers in Baltimore, MD, Dallas, TX, and Cleveland, OH, drawn from a stratified sampling process (Garboden & Rosen, 2018). This ethnographic study analyzed landlord motivations and ideologies of choosing not to participate in the HCVP (Garboden & Rosen, 2018). Garboden and Rosen (2018) indicated that the landlords' perceptions were based on the subjective experience of their interactions with the PHA who administered the HCVP. The study results summarized high-quality methods to collect interviews and engage with landlords using surveys and interviews to understand landlord grievances, build rapport, and have empathy while researching this population (Garboden & Rosen, 2018).

Cunningham et al. (2018) conducted a five-site pilot study for landlord acceptance and housing vouchers' denials. The five sites were Fort Worth, TX; Los Angeles, CA; Newark, NJ; Philadelphia, PA; and Washington, D.C (Cunningham et al., 2018). This study also focused on if landlords treated voucher holders differently than non-voucher holders (Cunningham et al., 2018). The study's goals were to test methods that measure different treatments, patterns, and prevalence of housing discrimination of voucher holders (Cunningham et al., 2018). The study



also analyzed the neighborhoods where landlords accepted and denied vouchers (Cunningham et al., 2018). The study used a three-stage testing methodology to examine engagement with landlords related to the specific aspects of leasing by utilizing different races/ ethnicities as fair housing and housing discrimination testers (Cunningham et al., 2018). Finally, the study acknowledged that the local source of income (SOI) mandates forced landlords to lease their units through the voucher HCVP (Cunningham et al., 2018). Still, there were unintended consequences that the SOI protections caused regarding affordable housing availability because the landlords refused to comply with the SOI mandates (Cunningham et al., 2018).

Nisar, Murdoch, Elgin, Vachon, and Horseman (2018) conducted mixed-methods research that included quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative part reviewed administrative data regarding landlords and participants, including socioeconomic demographic characteristics and census tract variables from 2010 to 2016 (Nisar et al., 2018). The qualitative part evaluated the PHA policy for the HCVP and interviewed the staff from nine PHAs regarding administrative burdensome practices (Nisar et al., 2018). These same PHAs were practicing innovative efforts to increase landlord engagement (Nisar et al., 2018). Another research goal was to showcase innovative practices that PHAs used to attract landlords to participate in the HCVP (Nisar et al., 2018). The descriptive statistics research illustrated that the number of landlords decreased during this timeframe, although the number of voucher holders remained the same (Nisar et al., 2018). The study explained the PHA staff's perceptions of variables that affected the landlords' participation in the HCVP, which are as follows: fair market rents, rental amounts, profitability, administrative burdens, bureaucracy, inspections, PHA lack of accountability, past negative experience with PHA, and strained relationship with PHAs (Nisar et al., 2018).

Zuberi (2019) conducted a qualitative study that used in-depth interviews of landlords at a PHA in Pennsylvania (Zuberi, 2019). The study's goal was to understand the landlords' perspective related to their experiences of participating in the HCVP (Zuberi, 2019). The data revealed that landlords had negative experiences with the PHA's bureaucracy, ineffective communication, policies, and practices (Zuberi, 2019). The study also illustrated that some PHAs lack real estate knowledge and capacity of how to run efficient governmental operations (Zuberi, 2019). The research results also indicated implementing institutional reform to increase affordable housing supply through landlords' retention was necessary for the future HCVP's success (Zuberi, 2019).

Garboden, Rosen, Deluca, and Edin (2018) interviewed a 127 random and field sample of landlords in Baltimore, MD, Dallas, TX, and Cleveland, OH, from the HUD system (Garboden et al., 2018). The study focused on what deters landlords from participating in the HCVP and the landlords' cost-benefit analysis perspective to participate (Garboden et al., 2018). The study also illustrated that many landlords who have had past negative experiences with the HCVP withdrew from the program altogether (Garboden et al., 2018). Finally, the study demonstrated that HCVP policy reform is necessary to keep landlords engaged (Garboden et al., 2018). Also, PHAs should remove bureaucratic practices that deter the landlord from participating and providing landlord educational workshops (Garboden et al., 2018).

A case study coupled with semi-structured interviews and observations of landlord outreach efforts were conducted at the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) (Varady et al., 2017). Varady et al. (2017) performed a research study to address the absence of PHA recruitment. A purpose sample and snowball sampling methodology were used to collect data from landlords and other stakeholders (Varady et al., 2017). These marketing endeavors

were studied to improve landlord attitudes toward the strengths and weaknesses of recruitment and retention efforts (Varady et al., 2017). The research findings revealed that CMHA did not care much about the landlord's concerns, perceptions, or attitudes about the HCVP, both in terms of day-to-day communication and management of the HCVP as it relates to the bureaucracy that landlord received (Varady et al., 2017).

### **Landlord Cost-Benefit Analysis**

Schwartz (2015) acknowledges that voucher holders have a challenging time finding units; even when units are available, landlords chose not to lease through the HCVP because of the previous negative experience of dealing with the PHA bureaucracy (Schwartz, 2015). When the demand for rental units is high, landlords do not need voucher holders guaranteed rents to meet their profitability and business goals for rental properties (Cunningham et al., 2018; Lens, 2013; McClure, 2013; Schwartz, 2015). Landlords conduct a cost-benefit analysis of whether to deal with the bureaucracy that comes with the guaranteed rent compared to dealing with a private market renter (Cunningham et al., 2018; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; Nisar et al., 2018; Nisar et al., 2018; Schwartz, 2015). Furthermore, finding housing in competitive rental markets is challenging for voucher holders due to the Great Recession's foreclosures (McClure, 2013). Therefore, tight rental markets have meant more competition for rental housing owners' units who have a choice whether or not to deal with the PHA bureaucracy, which has made it difficult for voucher holders (Lens, 2013; McClure, 2013; Schwartz, 2015). McClure (2013) further validates that the competition between voucher participants and regular market-rate tenants is an underlying problem when finding quality affordable housing for voucher holders.

## **Housing Policy Reform**

Each PHA has enough flexibility and local discretion to manage the HCVP to the unique constraints and opportunities present in their local market (McClure, 2013). Therefore, HCVP can create effective and efficient policies and practices to increase landlords' satisfaction, ultimately enhancing the relationship between landlords and PHAs (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020). Rosen (2020) explained that expanding the supply of units to voucher holders could also attract and keep more landlords participating in the HCVP. The innovative approach of increasing housing supply by incentivizing more landlords to participate in HCVP is critical to solving the affordable housing crisis (Rosen, 2020). Some PHAs have devoted funds to reimburse landlords for costs incurred through renting to voucher holders, such as damage reimbursements and security deposits (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). Another innovative approach is to provide landlords with a vacancy loss payment for lost rent during the lease-up process and provide them with loss mitigation funds to combat fears regarding the stigmas and stereotypes that voucher holders will destroy a landlord's property (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019).

Garboden et al. (2018) affirmed that policymakers need to consider how landlords feel about their decision to participate in the HCVP. There is also a significant need for institutional reform, specifically on landlord frustration toward bureaucratic processes and PHAs (Garboden, Rosen, Greif, DeLuca, & Edin, 2018). Rosen (2020) suggested that voucher experts emphasize the need for housing reform to make the HCVP more efficient and effective. Housing reforms should reduce the bureaucratic red tape for landlords by simplifying landlords' inspection process through biennial or triennial inspections (Rosen, 2020). The bureaucratic red tape ultimately deters landlords from participating in the HCVP (Rosen, 2020). Rosen (2020) indicates that public

policy should be designed to understand landlords' perceptions about the HCVP. This is important for increasing landlord participation as a return on investment for voucher holders and meeting performance measures for PHAs (Rosen, 2020).

### **Collaborative Governance**

Another way would be to diminish the bureaucratic barriers that discourage landlords from participating in the HCVP is to create a regional HCVP in one single jurisdiction or metropolitan area through collaborative governance (HUD Reference Guide, 2020; Kettl, 2002; Schwartz, 2015). HUD released the proposed rule in 2014 for PHAs to create a consortium to remove administrative burdens and bureaucracy from administering the HCVP (Seicshnaydre, 2016). Landlords often complain about how the policies and practices are different at local HCVPs and how this is frustrating to operate their business model with ambiguity (HUD Reference Guide, 2020; Varady et al., 2017). Tighe and Mueller (2013) substantiate that in most metropolitan areas that is no single regional HCVP in the United States; however, most of the time, the largest PHA in the region has expanded to cover the entire metropolitan area.

When there are multiple PHAs in a metropolitan area with one large PHA, the PHAs should create a regional HCVP; this will create consistent policies (administrative plan) that will reduce the mundane paperwork, excessive slow practices, and remove the confusing practices of multiple discretionary PHAs (Schwartz, 2015). Seicshnaydre (2016) explains how PHAs are encouraged to collaborate regionally when creating policies for their HCVPs to reduce administrative bureaucracy for all stakeholders. If the PHAs create regional policies, this reduces the administrative burden on the PHAs and addresses confusing policies and procedures of different agencies (HUD Reference Guide, 2020; Seicshnaydre, 2016). A regional HCVP would increase administrative efficiencies, administrative fees for the PHA and remove institutional

bureaucracy that deters landlords from participating in the HCVP while creating economies of scale and collaborative governance for PHAs (Schwartz, 2015).

#### Extrinsically Motivated Bureaucracy

In the study conducted by Varady et al. (2013), the authors illustrated that the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) scored a perfect 145 out of 145 for its annual Section Eight Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) performance review to obtain the high performer designation (Varady et al., 2013). This study also illustrated the rational choice theory decision of the CMHA officials (i.e., the board of commissioners, senior staff) to sacrifice the relationship with landlords to be a high performer. Their nonchalant worldview and agenda-setting of ignoring the landlords' dissatisfaction within the institutional bureaucracy operations of the CMHA correlates with the phenomenon of why landlords have withdrawn from the HCVP (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; Varady et al., 2013; Varady et al., 2017). Likewise, the CMHA "looked good on paper;" although the CMHA provided poor customer service, had a terrible reputation, and landlords were withdrawing from participating in its HCVP (Varady et al., 2013; Varady et al., 2017). Moreover, the PHA still scored a perfect "145" for its SEMAP performance assessment based on meeting HUD mandates (Varady et al., 2013). The study illustrated that the CMHA officials focused on meeting HUD's regulatory performance mandates for the extrinsic motivation benefit of being labeled a "high performer" (Varady et al., 2013).

Another affirmation of the CMHA study was the landlords' perceptions compared to the CMHA officials' worldview based on meeting the minimum standards of regulatory mandates and receiving the higher performer status for the HUD SEMAP score (Varady et al., 2013). This is a direct correlation of the attitudes and perceptions of some PHAs, which have been a catalyst for the phenomenon of landlords withdrawing from participating in the HCVP (Varady et al.,

2013). CMHA failed to maintain its public image, reputation, and provide public service to recruit and retain landlords (Varady et al., 2013). However, there was a difference with the public administrator's worldview in the study, which focused on the relationship of the public-private partnerships between the CMHA and landlords (Varady et al., 2013).

The CMHA study also concurred with other research regarding the perceptions of landlords related to the cost-benefit analysis of dealing with the red tape of the PHA compared to working with a non-subsidized private renter (Varady et al., 2013). When the CMHA implemented policy changes, landlords were not informed of these changes and felt they were treated worse than voucher holders (Varady et al., 2017). CMHA was not concerned that landlords have to pay a mortgage, taxes, insurance, make repairs, keep up with maintenance, pay miscellaneous fees, and other essential elements of running a real estate business (Varady et al., 2017). Landlords wanted to be treated equally, just like voucher holders, and receive effective communication from the CMHA's staff (Varady et al., 2017). The study mentions the mundane paperwork process of leasing to a voucher holder that includes re-examination, inspecting the unit, executing a lease, signing the HAP contract, and the ineffective communication with the institutional bureaucratic PHA is sometimes not worth the hassle of the guaranteed rental payment (Cunningham et al., 2018; Garboden et al., 2018; Nisar et al., 2018; Varady et al., 2013). The landlords indicated that if they did not lease to a voucher holder, then the voucher holder would have one less choice to choose from because no one wants to work with the bureaucratic CMHA (Varady et al., 2013).

Varady et al. (2013) explained that property management companies understood the complexities and how to navigate the bureaucracy of PHAs and the HCVP. Varady et al. (2013) study validated that property managers might be more willing to participate in the HCVP

because of their familiarity with how the bureaucracy of the HCVP works compared to a rental housing owner or someone who inherited a property considering leasing it through the HCVP (Varady et al., 2013). Ultimately, the Varady et al. (2013) study affirmed that the PHA's institutional bureaucracy that includes the administrative burdensome paperwork, red tape, and paper-driven practices deter landlords from participating in the HCVP.

### Institutional Bureaucracy

Schwartz (2015) explains that each PHA that administers an HCVP is evaluated by the Section Eight Management Assessment System (SEMAP) annually. Each PHA is given performance points across 14 administrative areas, leading to a total performance score of 145 points (McClure, 2013). PHA's institutional bureaucracy is "resistant to change" based on the agenda-setting of being labeled a high performer under SEMAP (North, 1990). The PHA is also extrinsically motivated to receive the administrative fee from HUD and comply with the Annual Contributions Contract (ACC) to meet HUD mandates (Schwartz, 2015).

Institutional bureaucracy is an instrument of rationality, and it seeks to order processes and produce outputs by regular means that are amenable to systematic analysis such as SEMAP, the higher performer designation, the ACC, and administrative fee (Ferlie et al., 2005; Schwartz, 2015; North, 1990; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). The PHA operates under the neoclassical model and wants to maintain the status quo, the PHA's institutional bureaucracy does not want to change but instead wants to keep things the same based on the rationality of its inherent public housing paradigm (North, 1990; Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Muller, 2013).

These perceived administrative burdens and institutional bureaucracy of PHAs remove the incentives of the guaranteed rent based on the "cost of doing business with the PHA" for landlords to participate in the HCVP (Cunningham et al., 2018; Desmond & Perkins, 2016;



Freeman & Li, 2012; Garboden et al., 2018; Nisar et al., 2018). Therefore, the philosophical “carrot on the stick” (guaranteed rent) is compared to the cost of bureaucracy for landlords whereas the phenomenon had led to the withdrawal of 10,000 landlords annually (Garboden et al., 2018; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; Nisar et al., 2018; Rosen, 2020; Varady et al., 2017). The PHA is a New Deal program that functions under the institutional bureaucracy that utilizes the neoclassical model (North, 1990). However, the HCVP also operates under the New Public Management (NPM) model that incorporates public-private partnerships by partnering with demand-side actor landlords through principal-agent contracts (Kettl, 2002). The relationship between PHAs and landlords is inherently in conflict because of these different paradigms (Kettl, 2002; North, 1990). The PHA institution would holistically have to drop the neoclassical public housing model to embrace the NPM HCVP model (Desmond & Perkins, 2016; North, 1990).

Ultimately, these are some of the reasons why NAR initially opposed the Public Housing Act of 1937 and wanted to use a housing certificate paradigm in the first place (Tighe & Mueller, 2013). NAR understood that the PHA institutional framework would create institutional bureaucracy and administrative burdens that would affect the entire real estate industry and local housing markets (Haines & Greene, 2008; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). The resistance to change and to keep the status quo is a downfall of the neoclassical bureaucratic model of the PHA and its failed public housing paradigm (North, 1990). As a result, the phenomenon of losing 10,000 landlords annually is alarming and has ultimately reduced the number of affordable choices that voucher holders can actively "choose" (HCV Evidence Matters, 2019). Moreover, the price of bureaucracy and the willingness to keep the status quo can be alleviated by streamlining HCVP

operations through technology to increase landlord retention (Cunningham et al., 2018; HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; North, 1990).

Max Weber's status quo bureaucracy model played a significant role in developing the New Deal, neoclassical PHA (Kettl, 2002; Denhardt et al., 2014). However, the NPM model created an opportunity to cut costs by using principal-agent contracts through public-private partnerships under the HCVP to achieve economic performance (Ferlie et al., 2005; North, 1990). Furthermore, the neoclassical public housing model and the NPM HCVP model conflict because the neoclassical is tied to institutional bureaucracy, and the NPM is linked to institutional change theory (Ferlie et al., 2005; North, 1990; Rosen, 2020; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). The bureaucracy was not intentionally met to be a barrier but was created to establish standard operating procedures (SOPs) and systems for business and governmental operations (Ferlie et al., 2005). Over time, paradigms changed, and the daunting task of bridging the gap between theory and practice did not come to fruition for the HCVP (Riccucci, 2010). These unintended consequences are based on the social, political, and economic ideology within the inherent institutional bureaucracy of the PHA and HUD that has worked against the HCVP since its inception (Cunningham et al., 2018; North, 1990). Nonetheless, this has led to the PHA's inability to keep up with modern times, including implementing best and evidence-based practices to streamline operations because of institutional bureaucracy and the "resistance to change" (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; North, 1990).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This descriptive statistics research study explored landlords' opinions at the Dothan Housing Authority regarding removing the bureaucratic red tape to increase their participation through streamlining operations through technology. The institutional change theory model was

used as a basis for understanding how institutional bureaucracy influenced the experiences and perceptions of landlords (North, 1990). The institutional change theory addresses the human exchange regarding social, political, or economic performances (North, 1990). The institutional change theory creates the institutional system's evolution and has been essential to historical change (North, 1990). North (1990) explains how institutions define how our society is set up and the rules of the game, including human constraints that control social interaction, including organizational cultures.

Research is conducted in public administration to create efficiency, effectiveness, and equitable public policy by improving governmental operations through connecting theory and practice (Ricucci, 2010). Although the nexus of institutional change correlates with retaining landlords and economic performance, the ambiguity of implementing evidence-based practices within a bureaucratic institution to correct the problem has been the constant issue for PHAs (Ricucci, 2010). Ricucci (2010) illustrates that research in public administration is also conducted to analyze government operations to understand better ways to improve them. However, politics and people create an institutional bureaucratic environment that drives public entities such as PHAs that perpetuates the continued operations in a state of ambiguity (Ricucci, 2010).

North (1990) affirms that the correlation of economic performance and the nexus for institutional change is required to retain the demand-side landlord to continue participating in the HCVP. Without institutional change, the PHA's economic performance will continue to fail, and the PHA will continue to lose landlords that will affect its funding allocation and affordable housing choices for voucher holders (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; North, 1990). The nexus between institutional change theory and the public housing institution also stems from the

neoclassical PHA paradigm structure, which operated under the neoclassical model (North, 1990); Schwartz, 2015). Moreover, PHAs have previously adopted a much more complex, cumbersome, and bureaucratic organizational structure opposite to the rest of the real estate industry (North, 1990; Schwartz, 2015). Schwartz (2015) indicates that the human interactions of today's PHAs' model are embedded in the culture of the public housing institutional framework created within the New Deal Public Housing Act of 1937.

The purpose of this public administration research focuses on creating and implementing evidence-based practices to solve phenomena of landlords withdrawing from the HCVP (Ricucci, 2010). Ricucci (2010) explains that institutional reform acknowledges that because of human interactions, complexity, and operating in a political environment focused on meeting the term "satisfied," the challenge of institutional change will require innovative, cost-effective solutions. Instead, the PHA is not concerned with finding real solutions to problems but instead is concerned with meeting the status quo and checking the box as a public sector entity, such as being labeled as a "high performer" under its Section Eight Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) (Ricucci, 2010). The need for institutional change is paramount for the survival of the HCVP after a decade of losing of 110,000 landlords (North, 1990). North (1990) indicates that the correlation between evolution and institutional change creates entrepreneur opportunities for organizations willing to change.

North (1990) explained that the entrepreneur opportunities for a public organization's evolution are a return on investment for economic and political prosperity, especially for an entitlement program like the HCVP. The public organization that pursues technological evolution embraces institutional change, which creates a sustainable future that avoids extinction and economic failure through incrementalism (Ferlie et al., 2005; North, 1990). North (1990)

expounds that an organization's evolution depends on its stakeholders and agents of change who must be entrepreneurial and persistent in achieving sustainable institutional change. The PHA's institutional culture shift from a "brick and mortar" culture to technological culture is a challenge for an institution built on a bureaucracy resistant to institutional change (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; North, 1990). If public organizations such as PHAs can embrace institutional change, they will maximize their return on investment and achieve economic performance by streamlining their operations through technology to remain relevant (Cunningham et al., 2018; North, 1990).

The federal government attempted to solve the affordable housing problem with a PHA solution built on the neoclassical institutional bureaucracy model that ultimately failed (Green & Haines, 2008). Although the HCVP has grown to be the most successful affordable housing program in history, its future is at stake with the phenomenon of landlord withdrawal from participating in the program (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). The PHA is a product of the neoclassical New Deal bureaucracy paradigm, and in contrast, the HCVP is a product of the NPM principal-agent/ public-private partnership paradigm (Denhardt et al., 2014; Ferlie et al., 2005; Kettl, 2002). The paradoxical issue is that the bureaucracy also created institutions built on human interactions that are simultaneously naturally resistant to change and these same (North, 1990).

To meet landlords' satisfaction will require the PHA outdated institution to evolve from the neoclassical public housing model to a modern-day technological quasi-government hybrid entity to successfully retain landlords (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; North, 1990). The institutional change will require that the PHA embrace a 21<sup>st</sup> technological environment (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; North, 1990). The landlords'

retention in the HCVP depends on PHA's evolution to embrace technology and holistically remove institutional bureaucracy from its operations (North, 1990). The PHA must mirror the private sector by streamlining its operations through technology to embrace efficiency and effectiveness to retain landlord participation in the HCVP (Threatt, 2020).

### **Chapter Summary**

This literature review chapter provided a comprehensive analysis of the relevant research to explain the importance of this study, which is to analyze how the theory of institutional change is essential to streamlining the HCVP operations through technology to increase landlord retention by removing institutional bureaucracy of the PHA (North, 1990). The literature review provided an innovative effort to examine researchers' opinions, thoughts, and attitudes using questionnaires, surveys, interviews, and observations, highlighting a rich representation of the qualities and contributors. However, landlords' perspectives were not explicitly explored, and how institutional bureaucracy influences their cost-benefit analysis decision to participate in the HCVP. Although this research is merited in the public administration field, what remains to be studied is the perceptions and views of landlords' opinions on improving the HCVP to retain their participation. The lack of information indicated more research was necessary to expand the public administration field's empirical knowledge.

Haines and Green (2008) indicate that housing policymakers have endeavored to analyze whether affordable housing is a supply or demand problem and whether a supply-side or demand-side actor should correct the issue. To address the gaps in the literature, this original research study analyzed the data from landlords' perspectives using the institutional change theory. There have been limited studies conducted on the landlord perspective of how to streamline the operations of the HCVP. The majority of the existing studies focused on attracting

more landlords to the HCVP, landlord acceptance and denial of housing vouchers, and landlord experiences in leasing through the HCVP. Therefore, minimal research has focused on obtaining landlords' thoughts or opinions on streamlining the HCVP operations through technology or their retention in the HCVP by removing the bureaucratic red tape. This research study will accomplish this task to ascertain the landlord stakeholder's thoughts and opinion.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

The Dothan Housing Authority (DHA) administers the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) with a total of 1,302 vouchers in its portfolio. DHA provides voucher management for 696 housing choice vouchers (HCVs) and 606 Project-Based Vouchers (PBVs). DHA administers HCVs/PBVs in the following counties in the Dothan Metropolitan Area (DMA): Houston, Geneva, Henry, and Dale. DHA has successfully converted four public housing properties to the RAD PBV program. The DHA receives approximately 8-million-dollars in HCVP funding annually. Over the next year, the DHA plans to acquire an additional 208 HCVs from a neighboring PHA within its metropolitan area and has applied to HUD to become a Regional PHA under the collaborative governance model (Kettl, 2002; Schwartz, 2015).

Moreover, the DHA plans to convert its remaining 117 public housing units to the Section 22 Streamlined Voluntary Conversion (SVC) Asset Repositioning initiative. The DHA is designated as a High Performer based on its last Section Eight Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) performance assessment. The DHA scored 135 out of the total 150 points in 2019. The DHA also received the High Performer designation for its Public Housing Assessment System (PHAS) score in 2018 for scoring a 98 out of 100. Finally, the DHA also manages 19 market-rate apartments.

This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the DHA, research setting, purpose of the study, instrumentation, population, sample, participants, instrumentation, the research question, the hypotheses, research design, and data analysis. This chapter also



examined the threats to validity and reliability, internal validity, external validity, reliability, and limitations of methodology. Finally, this chapter summarizes why this exploratory research study was necessary to study the landlord participant views on streamlining the operations of the HCVP through technology to keep them engaged and satisfaction that would result in their retention as a landlord (Ricucci, 2010).

### **Research Setting**

The DHA currently operates a "brick and mortar" neoclassical PHA heavily dependent on paper and administering the HCVP face to face. The DHA does not operate an optimized HCVP. DHA sends landlords paper checks, does not offer direct deposit, does not have a responsive website, does not have a landlord portal on their website, does not allow electronic signatures, does not have a landlord liaison position, and inspections process is cumbersome. Therefore, landlords were not required to have an email address in the DHA's housing software. DHA only communicates with landlords through phone and mail. Out of the 222 active landlords in the DHA software database, there was a total of 127 active landlords with email addresses.

The DHA provided a letter of support for the dissertation research study. The DHA also agreed to provide a list of landlords that included their email addresses for active landlords who currently had an executed HAP contract with the agency. An administrator at the DHA served as the gatekeeper of landlord contact information and provided the researcher with a list of landlord email addresses. In partnership with the DHA to address the phenomenon of landlords withdrawing from the HCVP, the DHA provided the researcher the active landlord HAP contract list, which included the email addresses for those landlords.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to gain opinions from landlords on how to streamline operations of the HCVP, increase retention by removing bureaucratic red tape of the HCVP, and how to cultivate better relationships between landlords and PHAs. Due to this study's purpose, the study's methodology was quantitative, and the research approach was descriptive statistics. The researcher sought to provide an illustrative description of the phenomenon through opinions, thoughts, and attitudes that landlord participants have regarding streamlining the HCVP through technology. There has been limited research to ascertain landlords' opinions on retaining their participation in the HCVP (Garboden and Rosen, 2018; Rosen, 2020).

The descriptive statistics methodology was chosen to test each hypothesis for this research study and validate the research question (Rudestam and Newton, 2015). Descriptive statistics was selected as the research methodology to paint a picture of the landlord participants' thoughts on how technology would improve communication and enhance customer service to increase landlord satisfaction with the HCVP (Rudestam and Newton, 2015). Through this descriptive statistics research study, the research added to the empirical knowledge of the field of public administration field by obtaining input from landlords on how to improve HCVP operations and implement institutional change to retain landlords. The descriptive statistics research study provided an objective inquiry into landlords' thoughts, opinions, and feelings participating in the HCVP at the DHA. This study reflected quantitative empiricism through descriptive statistics, whereas quantitative empirical evidence was drawn for the survey research method of landlord opinions (Ricucci, 2010). This quantitative empirical approach was

designed for illustrative purposes to create a public policy solution and add to the research knowledge base for landlords' phenomenon withdrawing from the HCVP (Ricucci, 2010).

### **Participants**

Each landlord participant of the study had an executed and active Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) payment contract with the DHA. The HAP contract is a legal agreement between the PHA and the landlord. The landlord participant leased their property to a voucher holder, and the DHA was paying the landlord participant on behalf of the voucher holder to lease the landlord participant's unit. This convenience sampling strategy allowed the researcher to understand the research problem (Johnson, 2014; Ricucci, 2010).

A cost-effective approach to obtaining the landlord's input related to their withdrawal from the HCVP was to directly ask the stakeholder whose experience gave them a worldview on ways to solve the public problem (Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999). Landlord participants played an essential role in providing critical information related to the experiential stakeholder population and the social reality of how to retain their participation in the HCVP (Rossi et al., 1999). Since little existing research was available regarding how landlords felt about retaining their participation in the HCVP by streamlining operations through technology, the researcher undertook original research using online surveys through convenience sampling of landlord participants at DHA (Rossi et al., 1999).

### *Sample Size*

Establishing the population and sample sizes started with the quantitative design of this descriptive statistics research study by recruiting through convenience sampling was a fundamental step (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). This research study chose the convenience sampling of landlords who are experiential stakeholders in the HCVP and have sufficient

knowledge of the problem with the institutional bureaucracy of the PHA (Rossi et al., 1999). The DHA's active landlord database was utilized for this convenience sampling descriptive statistics research study (Rossi et al., 1999). The convenience sampling of landlords who had at least a year of experience and had a current HAP contract was carefully decided to extrapolate the opinions and attitudes of those who identify with both institutional bureaucracy and the potential of institutional change (Rossi et al., 1999). Ultimately, the convenience sampling technique gave all landlords who have an active HAP contract with the DHA an equal opportunity to be selected to participate in the survey research study (Johnson, 2014).

Rudestam and Newton (2015) explained that deciding on the right number of participants is a sampling issue. This descriptive statistics research study's first step was to identify and locate landlord participants who had been a landlord for least one-year leasing their units through the HCVP at the DHA (Rudestam and Newton, 2015). The landlord participants that met the research selection criteria were solicited to participate in the descriptive statistics study voluntarily (Rudestam and Newton, 2015). This fundamental procedure in this descriptive statistics study identified and located participants who have experience leasing through the HCVP by recruiting participants from the DHA's active HAP contract list to respond to the survey. The active landlord has a HAP contract with the DHA and a voucher holder was living in the landlord's unit.

### **Instrumentation**

A structured online closed-ended survey was conducted to understand the landlord participants' opinions for this descriptive statistics study (Newton & Rudestam, 2015). This online closed-ended survey was issued to obtain input from landlord participants on ways to streamline the HCVP to increase their retention through technology. The closed-ended survey

played a paramount role in serving as a sufficient technique for answering the research question (Rudestam and Newton, 2015). This descriptive statistics research study's closed-ended questions were chosen because the response was uniform and easily understood for the landlord participants (Babbie, 2007). The data analysis of the closed-ended survey questions created an efficient process (Babbie, 2007). A closed-ended survey was issued to obtain input from landlord participants on ways to streamline the HCVP to increase their retention through technology.

The data was collected from the surveys of the landlord participants. The closed-ended surveys yielded the descriptive research study perspective based on the situation and the research questions to obtain valid data (Johnson, 2014). The closed-ended survey was conducted to retrieve landlords' opinions about who participate in the HCVP at the DHA. The researcher utilized the closed-ended questions to gain insight into quantitative information regarding landlord participants' opinions and thoughts (Johnson, 2014). The landlord-friendly closed-ended survey was created to ascertain the data (Rossi et al., 1999).

The survey was designed and developed within and sent by the Qualtrics software. A total of 27 survey questions were created within the Qualtrics software. This created an efficient, effective, and equitable method to collect the survey data. Prior to emailing the survey instrument, it was piloted through the Qualtrics software. The survey instrument was sent out to four affordable housing professionals working in the public housing industry. One was a pracademic (practitioner and researcher), and the other three were practitioners. The pilot was used to test the survey and effect on the end-user and user-friendly it was. This software also allowed the researcher to collect the data quantitatively and efficiently. The survey was divided into five sections: qualifying characteristics of landlord participants, demographics characteristics of landlord participants, experience characteristics of landlord participants,

improving communication responses from landlord participants, and enhancing customer service responses from landlord participants.

### **Research Question**

Garboden and Rosen (2018) indicated that HCVP quantitative studies lack the opinions and thoughts of demand-side actors such as landlords, investors, and property managers who participate in low-income housing programs. Garboden and Rosen (2018) also indicated that there should be a sociological examination to understand the landlord's cost-benefit analysis decision making and their thoughts of how to make the HCVP better. The research question for this descriptive statistics research study was focused on the ideology that the experiential stakeholder should play a larger role in providing feedback on how to improve the HCVP through landlord-friendly practices (Rosen, 2020). The research question asked, Do landlords think that streamlining the HCVP operations through technology will increase their retention by removing institutional bureaucracy and implementing institutional change?

### **Hypotheses**

1. Hypothesis 1: Landlords agree that improving Communication through technology would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord.
2. Hypothesis 2: Landlords agree that enhancing Customer Service through technology would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord.

### **Research Design**

The online survey was chosen as a cost-effective instrument to illustrate the landlord's opinions about improving the HCVP through technology to retain their participation through the convenience sample (Rudestam and Newton, 2015). The survey research method was chosen to describe the landlord population too large to observe directly (Babbie, 2007;

Rudestam and Newton, 2015). A survey is a cost-effective method to obtain landlord participants' opinions and how their thoughts of leasing through the HCVP (Newton & Rudestam, 2015). The landlord participant was asked closed-ended questions from a list provided by the researcher (Babbie, 2007). Any questions from the research study landlord participants were answered through a phone call, text message, or email detailed in the email invitation and informed consent.

The descriptive statistics research study provided an objective inquiry into the thoughts, opinions, and feelings of landlords participating in the HCVP at the DHA through a closed-ended survey. The descriptive statistics research study aimed to obtain the opinions of landlord participants related to PHA bureaucracy and how this affects their participation in the HCVP. The descriptive statistics research study's goal was to understand the objective reality of the landlord participants in their interactions with the institutional bureaucracy of the PHA.

The descriptive research study provided an objective analysis to understand landlord participants' opinions who participate in the HCVP through their thoughts and attitudes about the phenomenon of landlord retention. The descriptive statistics research study also analyzed the objective collection of survey data of landlord participants' attitudes currently participating in the HCVP. The descriptive data study approach captured the landlord participants' thoughts who participate in the HCVP at the DHA for at least a year.

#### *Timeframe of Instrumentation*

Once the researcher received the IRB approval, an email invitation was sent to all landlords listed as active in the DHA's housing software database and had email addresses provided to the researcher. The active description in the housing software means that the landlords have an active HAP contract with the DHA, and the landlord is receiving a HAP

payment for the voucher(s) holder to lease their unit(s). Based on best-practices, the emailed online survey was sent out twice to allow all potential landlords to participate in the study. The collection period lasted for two weeks in November 2020 (a week directly behind each other), consisting of an initial sending week and a reminder week to obtain input from landlords participating in the DHA's HCVP.

The email invitation and informed consent explained this study's goal to obtain input from landlords on how to streamline HCVP operations through technology to increase retention by removing bureaucratic red tape. The email invitation and informed consent also explained how their participation in the survey study would help to advance the field of public administration, the understanding of the important role of landlords, and how to cultivate better relationships between landlords and PHAs. All potential landlord participants' questions were answered through any follow-up phone call or email detailed in the email invitation and informed consent.

#### *Informed Consent and Qualifying Questions*

The study's landlord participants were sent an email invitation through the Qualtrics software with the informed consent to participate in the research survey enclosed in the actual email itself through a link. Landlord participants who accepted the invitation to participate were taken to an online Qualtrics software consent form where the landlord participants read and electronically signed the informed consent. The consent form itself was created using the West Chester University of Pennsylvania's (WCUPA) Institutional Review Board (IRB) informed consent generator online. If landlord participants agreed, they clicked "I consent, begin the study," and if they disagreed, they clicked "I do not consent, I do not wish to participate." If a landlord participant chose not to consent and did not want to participate in the study, the



Qualtrics software thanked them for participating in the landlord study and explained that the response had been recorded, and their session ended. The researcher and the faculty advisor electronically received the signed informed consent from the landlord participants through the Qualtrics software.

After the landlord completed the consent form, the survey instrument immediately appeared with the two qualifying questions for the landlord participants to meet the criteria to participate in the online survey. The landlord participant must have an active HAP contract and have been a landlord with the DHA for at least a year. This isolated and detached online survey opened, split, and separated the informed consent from survey responses, creating an additional privacy and confidentiality layer for the landlord participants. If the landlord participant answered “no” to any of these two initial questions, then the online survey ended, and it thanked them for participating in the landlord study. Landlord participants could have stopped the survey or withdraw at any time during the survey process by discontinuing the survey. The online survey took approximately 5 minutes to complete. Once completed, the landlord participants’ commitment as a respondent to the dissertation study ended. There was no monetary benefit or incentive to participate in the survey research study for landlord participants.

#### *Inclusion Criteria for Selection*

Based on the inclusion criteria, all landlords were invited to participate in the study. The inclusion criteria helped answer the research question regarding respondents who are currently leasing through the HCVP at the DHA with an active HAP contract that meets the study's target population criteria. The landlord data was taken from the DHA’s housing software for all active landlords receiving a housing assistance payment (HAP) for a voucher holder to lease their unit through the HCVP. The administrator at DHA who served as the gatekeeper of landlord email

addresses provided a list of landlords to the researcher. The DHA submitted a letter of support for this dissertation study for the researcher to utilize the data to conduct the landlord study.

### *Estimated Response Rate*

The DHA administers a total of 1,302 vouchers with its HCVP, and there was a total of 222 active landlords in its housing software. However, only 127 active landlords had email addresses. Based on the number of active landlords with email addresses, the study estimates that a response rate of 50% would respond to this online survey. The careful probability sampling provides a group of landlord respondents whose characteristics may be taken to reflect those of the larger population through convenience sampling (Babbie, 2007). Therefore, this estimated response rate conscientiously constructed a closed-ended standardized questionnaire to provide data in the same form from all respondents (Babbie, 2007).

### *Landlord Participant Data Storage*

The data was collected through online closed-end surveys through the WCUPA Qualtrics software license. The data collection and data analysis process adhered to the protocol and confidentiality requirement for the IRB of WCUPA and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), along with the privacy standards of the DHA. All information was stored in online cybersecurity database access only to the researcher. This was a critical step since the HCVP is a federal housing program, and the staff of the DHA would be protected during the data analysis through confidentiality (Johnson, 2014). All information shared during the survey remained confidential, and the participants' names were not be attached to any survey. Survey data was stored in multiple, password-protected, digital clouds. The Qualtrics software kept two separate sets of data. One data was store informed consent records, separated from and de-identified from the landlord participants' response data, minimizing

exposure risk. The datasets were downloaded to both researcher's personal computer and cloud storage drive, which were password protected. The data will be stored for three years before destruction.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis for the descriptive statistics research study was drawn from the online closed-ended surveys. Through the statistical and quantitative analysis of landlords' survey research, the researcher evaluated if landlord participants felt that streamlining the HCVP to remove the bureaucracy would increase their participation. The descriptive statistics research study approach analyzed the opinions and attitudes of landlords who would continue participating in the HCVP because of the optimization of operations through technology (Johnson, 2014; Newton & Rudestam, 2015). The survey data analysis created empirical knowledge for the landlord participants' views of participating in the HCVP (Ricucci, 2010).

The Qualtrics software created and collected the online closed-ended survey data and provided an efficient, effective, and equitable method to analyze the data. The Qualtrics software also allowed the researcher to analyze and interpret the data quantitatively and efficiently. A percentage will illustrate and provide a snapshot of the data analysis for this descriptive statistics study (Johnson, 2014). This data analysis will shed light on whether or not landlord participants believed that streamlining the operations of the HCVP through technology will increase their participation (Johnson, 2014). The improving communication section of the survey had seven questions, and the enhancing customer service section of the survey had eight questions, for a total of 15 questions. These variables were calculated based on the landlord participants' responses related to the research question and hypotheses with an ultimate goal to reject or fail to reject the null hypothesis.

## **Threats to Validity and Reliability**

Garboden and Rosen (2018) explain that the interview is subjective speech and shows how landlord participants view the world around them. This is a basic method to observe the landlord participants' insight into their worldview (Garboden and Rosen, 2018). The descriptive statistics study used validity and reliability simultaneously to pull together information for this study, which described these patterns of opinions and thoughts of the landlord participants (Van De Ven, 2013). The measurement variables of reliability and validity through this descriptive statistics study lacked inferential statistics testing toward concluding the larger landlord population because of the closed-survey instrument itself (Rudestam & Newton, 2015).

Moreover, the reliability and validity of an online closed-ended survey will create consistent data results. This descriptive statistics research study's validity illustrated that the findings are factual to address this phenomenon and answer the intended research question (Van De Ven, 2013). The reliability of the descriptive statistics research study chosen for this data analysis was accurate and led to prove the argument for the opinions and thoughts of landlord participants (Van De Ven, 2013). The online closed-ended survey created reliable and valid data-driven by landlord participants' responses who experienced the phenomena (Rudestam and Newton, 2015; Van De Ven, 2013).

## **Internal Validity**

The empirical knowledge search through the positivism approach allows the objective of the online survey of the landlord participants to function in the knowable reality (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Newton and Rudestam (2015) explained that a positivist's role is to evaluate a

respondent's opinion (landlord participants) who participate in the HCVP. The positivism utilized the online closed-ended survey's controlled environment to measure landlord participants' cause and effect responses (Hesse-Biber, 2017). The accurate and factual data attempted to address landlords' phenomenon of withdrawing from the HCVP by asking objective, policy solution closed-ended questions (Rudestam and Newton, 2015; Van De Ven, 2013).

### **External Validity**

The convenience sampling of this descriptive statistics study was used to recruit landlord participants at the DHA who were currently participating in the HCVP to obtain a descriptive illustration of the larger landlord population (Riccucci, 2010). Likewise, the online survey was chosen based on being a cost-effective instrumentation tool to gain the input of landlord participants based on the large pool of potential respondents (Johnson, 2014). The online survey is a cost-effective delivery instrument to obtain a larger population's thoughts and opinions, such as landlord participants (Babbie, 2007). Closed-ended survey questions compared to the open-ended survey questions provide greater uniformity of responses and are quickly processed than open-ended ones (Babbie, 2007). The positivist approach utilized the top-down approach for this descriptive statistic through an online closed-ended survey to obtain an objective analysis of landlord opinions of ways to streamline the HCVP through technology. The social reality of landlords in the natural world participating in a neoclassical PHA model governed by institutional bureaucracy creates an opportunity for the positivist approach to research (Hesse-Biber, 2017; North, 1990).

## **Reliability**

Utilizing the convenience sampling focused on recruiting landlords familiar with the phenomenon added the necessary reliability for this study (Rudestam and Newton, 2015). The descriptive statistics research methodology was chosen to add to the knowledge base and build and test the theory for institutional change to administer the HCVP (Ricucci, 2010). The research study was also designed to test the hypothesis that landlords think streamlining the HCVP through technology would retain their participation as demand-side actors (Van De Ven, 2013). By testing and validating the hypothesis, this quantitative study was used to generate reliable empirical knowledge about the landlord participants' opinions, thoughts, and feelings of ways to remove the bureaucratic red tape of the HCVP (Ricucci, 2010). By gaining the landlords' opinions, this study provided reliable insight into landlord participants' worldview of streamlining the HCVP through technology (Johnson, 2014).

## **Limitations of Methodology**

This research study's limitation starts with the chosen topic based on its correlation with the study's phenomenon. The limitation is specific to this research study, which focused on the specific pain points of communication and customer service that landlords experience as it relates to the institutional bureaucracy of the PHA. This research study's design and natural weaknesses focused on landlords' opinions only, and not of the other stakeholders such as the PHA, voucher holder, or HUD. Another limitation of this research study was that the results could not be linked to other survey respondents with different backgrounds.

The limitation of this research study approach utilized closed-ended questions to obtain the opinions and thoughts of landlords. Additionally, the limitation of the methodology chosen for this study of closed-ended questions is on the respondents' anticipated responses based on

how the questions are structured (Babbie, 2007). Surveys are an objective, efficient, and effective tool to obtain feedback and input through the lens of the landlord participants' thoughts and opinions (Newton & Rudestam, 2015). The option of not including open-ended questions from either a quantitative or qualitative perspective by obtaining the experiences and perceptions of landlords through interviews is another limitation of the study (Babbie, 2007). This study's limitation of utilizing the convenience sampling technique instead of a random sampling technique for this descriptive statistics study. In comparison, the research study recruited landlords who had experience leasing at the DHA who were actively participating in the HCVP with an active HAP contract; instead of former landlords who withdrew from leasing through the HCVP altogether.

### **Chapter Summary**

The methodology of this research study was quantitative, and the research approach was descriptive statistics. The descriptive research study used closed-ended questions through a survey instrument to obtain specific information about the landlord participants' attitudes and opinions of ways of streamlining the operations of the HCVP at the DHA. Each landlord participant met the eligibility criteria by having an active HAP contract with the DHA as either a rental housing owner or property manager and had been a landlord for at least a year. The descriptive statistics research focused on developing a greater understanding of the landlords' attitudes removing the institutional bureaucracy and implementing institutional change at DHA. Nonetheless, this descriptive statistics study aimed to address the research gap from the opinions of landlords of ways to increase their retention in the HCVP by streamlining operations through technology.

In Chapter 4, Analysis and Results, the researcher discussed the descriptive statistics research study's findings. The survey research methods used for this descriptive statistical analysis for this dissertation study will be thoroughly described in Chapter 4 Results. The descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to reject or failed to reject the null hypothesis, as described in Chapter 4 Results.



## Chapter 4

### Results

To begin presenting the results for this study explains the data analysis through descriptive statistics, the researcher will start with the description of the sample (Rudestam and Newton, 2015). The convenience sampling of this descriptive statistics study was used to recruit landlords at the Dothan Housing Authority (DHA) who were currently participating in the HCVP as landlords to obtain a descriptive illustration of the larger landlord population. The researcher used the convenience sampling technique based on evidence-based practices to recruit landlords with experiential relevance for this study's survey research method (Rudestam and Newton, 2015). The research study participants were experiential experts of the phenomenon and individuals who have experienced institutional bureaucracy related to their participation as landlords leasing through the HCVP at the DHA.

DHA administers 1,302 vouchers with its HCVP. The DHA was not communicating effectively through email as initially assumed during the planning stages of this research study, nor was the DHA offering a direct deposit option for landlords participating in its HCVP. The DHA had a total of 222 landlords that have active HAP contracts. However, out of 222 active landlords, only 127 active landlords had email addresses in the DHA housing software database. The email invitations were sent twice in November 2020 within a week interval to all 127 landlords with email addresses. The researcher sent two separate email invitations to the potential 127 landlord participants. Of the 127 likely respondents, 17 opted out of the study, which included 15 emails that bounced back, and two potential landlord participants opted out of the study. Therefore, the email reached a total of 110 potential landlord participants. Of the 110

landlord participants, there was a 21% response rate for a total of 23 landlord participants for the survey study. The research study's results are presented here as it relates to the data obtained from the landlord participants' surveys.

### **Interrater Reliability**

After the researcher collects data, it is essential to add to the body of literature by reporting the instrument's reliability and validity, as evidenced in the new sample. The reliability of an instrument depends in part on the population for which that instrument is used (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Four executive-level housing professionals conducted the interrater reliability. Two of the interrater participants have a bachelor's degree, one has a master's degree, and one has a doctorate. Two of the interrater participants have a real estate license, and one has a mortgage license. Two of the interrater participants have a minimum of 10 years, and two have more than 20 years of experience in the public housing industry. The interrater participants could access, review, and complete the online 27 questions closed-ended survey through the Qualtrics software. The interrater participants received the pilot email with the enclosed consent form and 27 questions closed-ended survey. The interrater participants provided feedback to the researcher on parts of the surveys they found complicated or confusing and parts that would be easy for a layperson to understand and complete (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). All agreed that the closed-ended survey should obtain the desired results of the descriptive research study.

The sample in Table 1 described the qualifying characteristics of this research study. The descriptive statistics in Table 1 calculated percentages of four qualifying characteristics: agree to the consent form, current HAP contract, landlord for at least one year, and business model. Moreover, this descriptive statistics study had three qualifying closed-ended questions that were mandated. Likewise, two closed-ended questions determined if a landlord participant met the

study’s criteria to participate. The landlord participants that met the research selection criteria were permitted to continue in the research study.

**Table 1: Qualifying Characteristics of Landlord Participants**

Landlord Participant Category	Total	%
Consent Form	N=23	
Yes	22	96.00%
No	1	4.00%
Current HAP Contract	N=22	
Yes	18	82.00%
No (Did Not Qualify for the Study)	4	18.00%
Landlord for at least One-Year	N=18	
Yes	17	94.00%
No (Did Not Qualify for the Study)	1	6.00%
Landlord Business Model	N=17	
Rental Housing Owner	9	53.00%
Property Manager	3	18.00%
Both	5	29.00%

The first question for the qualifying characteristics was focused on consenting to participate in the research study data. All 23 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the total of 23 landlord participants who responded to the email invitation to participate in the landlord study, 96% of landlord participants agreed to consent to participate in the study. However, 4% did not consent and did not wish to participate in the study.

The second question for the qualifying characteristics was focused on having an active HAP contract with the DHA data. All 22 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 22 landlord participants who agreed to participate in the study, 82% of landlord participants had an active HAP contract with the DHA. However, 18% of landlord participants did not qualify for the study because they did not meet the active HAP contract's selection criteria.

The third question for the qualifying characteristics was focused on meeting the longevity of at least a year data. All 18 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 18 landlord participants who consented to participate in the study and had an active HAP contract with the Dothan Housing Authority, 94% of landlord participants had been landlords for at least a year with the DHA and met the criteria to continue to participate in the study. However, 6% did not qualify for the study because they did not meet the criteria of being a landlord for at least a year.

The fourth question for the qualifying characteristics was focused on the landlord business model data. All 17 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 17 landlord participants, 53% of landlord participants indicated that they were Rental Housing Owners, 18% of landlord participants stated that they were Property Managers, and 29% of landlord participants indicated that they were both Rental Housing Owners and Property Managers. This correlation of the 53% of rental housing owners is a direct reflection of the individual investors that account for the 1.0 million units and \$10-billion of the HCVP previously covered in Chapter 1 of this research study (HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019). Interestingly, the second-highest percentage of 29% of the landlord participants identified themselves as individual investors for their rental portfolio and provided property management for other landlords.

The sample in Table 2 described the demographics characteristics of the landlord participants in this research study. The descriptive statistics in Table 2 calculated percentages of four demographics characteristics: age, race, gender, and education.

The first question for the demographics characteristics was focused on the age data. All 17 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 17 landlord participants, 18% of

landlord participants were among the age range of 35 to 44, 29% of landlord participants were among the age range of 45 to 54, 12% of landlord participants were among the age range of 55 to 64, and 41% of landlord participants were among the age range of 65 and older.

**Table 2: Demographics Characteristics of Landlord Participants**

Landlord Participant Category	Total	%
Age	N=17	
18 to 24	0	0.00%
25 to 34	0	0.00%
35 to 44	3	18.00%
45 to 54	5	29.00%
55 to 64	2	12.00%
65 and older	7	41.00%
Race	N=17	
White/Caucasian	11	65.00%
Black/African American	5	29.00%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0.00%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0	0.00%
Hispanic or Latino	0	0.00%
Asian	0	0.00%
Two or more races	1	6.00%
Other	0	0.00%
Gender	N=17	
Male	10	59.00%
Female	7	41.00%
Other	0	0.00%
Highest Level of Education	N=17	
Some High School	0	0.00%
High School	2	12.00%
Some College	4	23.50%
Associate's	4	23.50%
Bachelor's	5	29.00%
Master's	2	12.00%
Doctorate	0	0.00%

The second question for the demographics characteristics was focused on race data. All 17 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 17 landlord participants, 65% of landlord participants identified themselves as White/ Caucasian, 29% of landlord participants identified themselves as Black/ African American, and 6% of landlord participants identified themselves as Two or more races.

The third question for the demographics characteristics was focused on gender data. All 17 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 17 landlord participants, 59% of landlord participants identified themselves as Male, and 41% (7) of landlord participants identified themselves as Female.

The fourth question for the demographics characteristics was focused on the education data. All 17 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 17 landlord participants, 12% of landlord participants indicated that their highest level of education was High School, 23.5% of landlord participants indicated that their highest level of education was Some College, 23.5% of landlord participants indicated that their highest level of education was an Associate's degree, 29% of landlord participants indicated that their highest level of education was a Bachelor's degree, and 12% of landlord participants indicated that their highest level of education was a Master's degree.

Interestingly, out of the 22 landlord participants who consented to participate in the landlord study, after the Demographics questions, the number of landlord participants dropped to a 73% response completion rate to a total of 16 respondents. This correlates with the limitation of the study of the length of the survey instrument itself. Additionally, landlords' educational level responses found in Table 2 based on 12% having a high school diploma and 23.50% have some college education could have affected the responses. This decrease in response rate could

also be attributed to the landlord participant's age in Table 2, whereas 41% were 65 and older, and 12% were 55 to 64 years old, found in Table 2.

The sample in Table 3 described the experience characteristics of landlord participants of this research study. The descriptive statistics in Table 3 calculated percentages of four experience characteristics: real estate or property management education, years of experience as a landlord in the HCVP, number of properties own or manage, and type of property owned or managed.

The first question for the experience characteristics was focused on real estate and property management education data. All 16 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 16 landlord participants, 25% of landlord participants indicated that they had a Real Estate License or a Property Management Certification, 69% of landlord participants stated that they did not have either a Real Estate License or Property Management Certification, and 6% of landlord participant indicated that they had both a Real Estate License and Property Management Certification.

The second question for the experience characteristics was focused on the length of time as a landlord with the HCVP data. All 16 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 16 landlord participants, 19% of landlord participants indicated that they had been a landlord between 1 to 2 years, 25% of landlord participants stated that they had been a landlord between 3 to 5 years, 25% of landlord participants indicated that they had been a landlord between 6 to 10 years, and 31% of landlord participants stated that they had been a landlord for 11 years or more.

The third question for the experience characteristics was focused on how many properties the landlord owned or managed data. All 16 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 16 landlord participants, 50% of landlord participants indicated that they own or manage between 1 to 4 properties, 12.5% of landlord participants indicated that they own or manage

between 5 to 10 properties, 12.5% of landlord participants indicated that they own or manage between 11 to 20 properties, and 25% of landlord participants indicated that they own or manage between 21 or more properties. In Table 2, 50% of landlord participants indicated that they own or manage 1 to 4 properties, which correlates with the type of property the landlord owns or manages. Ironically, none of the respondents indicated that they own or manage multifamily only. This correlation could be related to the City of Dothan's housing stock, which majority is single-family, or multifamily owners or property managers may have had negative experiences with the DHA's HCVP (City of Dothan & Dothan Housing Authority, 2018; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019).

**Table 3: Experience Characteristics of Landlord Participants**

<b>Landlord Participant Category</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Real License or Property Management Certification</b>	<b>N=16</b>	
Yes	4	25.00%
No	11	69.00%
Both	1	6.00%
 <b>Length of Time as Landlord with HCVP</b>	 <b>N=16</b>	
1 year or less	3	19.00%
1 to 5 years	4	25.00%
5 to 10 years	4	25.00%
10 years or longer	5	31.00%
 <b>Number of Rental Properties Owned or Managed</b>	 <b>N=16</b>	
1 property or less	8	50.00%
5 to 10 properties	2	12.50%
10 to 20 properties	2	12.50%
20 properties or more	4	25.00%
 <b>Type of Properties Owned or Manager</b>	 <b>N=16</b>	
Single-Family	12	75.00%
Multi-Family	0	0.00%
Both	4	25.00%



The fourth question for the experience characteristics was focused on how many properties the landlord owned or managed data. All 16 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 16 landlord participants, 75% of landlord participants indicated that they own or manage single-family only. No landlord participants indicated that they own or manage multi-family only, and 25% of landlord participants indicated that they own or manage both single-family and multi-family. The percentage of single-family correlates with the City of Dothan Strategic Affordable Housing Implementation Plan that illustrates that 74% of the respondents for this survey indicated that they live in single-family (City of Dothan & Dothan Housing Authority, 2018). This also correlates with the filtering process that most of the units on the HCVP are single-family and usually are leased by a rental housing owner (Schwartz, 2015). The large number of single-family also correlates with the findings in Table 1, where 53% of landlord participants were rental housing owners (HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019).

Interestingly, out of the 22 landlord participants who consented to participate in the landlord study, after the Experience questions, the number of landlord participants dropped to a 59% response completion rate to a total of 13 respondents. This may have correlated with the limitation of the study's length of the survey instrument itself. Landlord participants' educational level may justify the response rate decrease in Table 2 based on 12% having a high school diploma and 23.50% having some college education. The reduction in response rate could also be attributed to the landlord participant's age, whereas 41% were 65 and older, and 12% were 55 to 64 years old found in Table 2

In this section of the Results, the research question and hypotheses will be described and evaluated regarding the rejecting or failing to reject the null hypothesis.

## Research Question

Do landlords think that streamlining the HCVP operations through technology will increase their retention by removing institutional bureaucracy and implementing institutional change? To answer this research question, the researcher utilized the results of the hypothesis.

The sample in Table 4 described the improving communication responses from landlord participants of this research study. The descriptive statistics in Table 4 calculated percentages of responses related to Hypothesis 1 that landlords agreed that improving communication through technology would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord.

The first question for Hypothesis 1 was focused on DHA communicating through alternative methods accounts data. All 13 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 13 landlord participants, 100% of landlord participants agreed that communicating through social media, text message alerts, a landlord hotline, and landlord email accounts would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord.

The second question for Hypothesis 1 was focused on DHA having a virtual landlord liaison data. All 13 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 13 landlord participants, 92% of landlord participants agreed that a virtual landlord liaison (staff position) devoted entirely to landlords would streamline operations and retain their participation as landlords. Moreover, 8% of landlord participants disagreed.

The third question for Hypothesis 1 was focused on DHA conducting online and virtual training data. All 13 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 13 landlord participants, 61.5% of landlord participants agreed that conducting online and virtual training workshops for landlords and tenants would streamline operations and retain their participation. Moreover, 38.5% of landlord participants disagreed. This variable correlates with 69% of

landlords who did not have real estate or property management experience in Table 2.

Unfortunately, the DHA does not offer a landlord orientation or educational workshops to explain the HCVP rules, regulations, and roles of each stakeholder of the HCVP at this time.

**Table 4: Improving Communication Responses from Landlord Participants**

Improving Communication Category	Total	%
Social Media, Text Messages, Landlord Hotline & Emails	N=13	
Yes	13	100.00%
No	0	0.00%
Virtual Landlord Liaison (Staff Position)	N=13	
Yes	12	92.00%
No	1	8.00%
Online and Virtual Training for Landlords & Tenants	N=13	
Yes	8	61.50%
No	5	38.50%
Online Newsletter with Important Information & Updates	N=13	
Yes	11	85.00%
No	2	15.00%
Virtual Landlord Advisory Committee	N=13	
Yes	11	85.00%
No	2	15.00%
Virtual Landlord-Tenant Conflict Resolution Meetings	N=13	
Yes	9	69.00%
No	4	31.00%
Real-Time Inspection Status Notifications	N=13	
Yes	13	100.00%
No	0	0.00%

The fourth question for Hypothesis 1 was focused on DHA providing an online landlord newsletter data. All 13 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 13 landlord participants, 85% of landlord participants agreed that receiving an online landlord newsletter

with important information and updates would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord. Moreover, 15% of landlord participants disagreed.

The fifth question for Hypothesis 1 was focused on DHA establishing a virtual landlord advisory committee data. All 13 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 13 landlord participants, 85% of landlord participants agreed that establishing a virtual landlord advisory committee devoted to providing input and feedback for HCVP policies and practices would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord. Moreover, 15% of landlord participants disagreed.

The sixth question for Hypothesis 1 was focused on DHA providing virtual landlord-tenant meetings data. All 13 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 13 landlord participants, 69% of landlord participants agreed that if the DHA provided virtual landlord-tenant "conflict resolution" meetings, this would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord. Moreover, 31% of landlord participants disagreed. This variable correlates with 69% of landlords who did not have real estate or property management experience in Table 2.

The seventh question for Hypothesis 1 was focused on DHA receiving "real-time" inspection notifications data. All 13 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 13 landlord participants, 100% of landlord participants agreed that receiving notifications about your inspection's status in "real-time" through text message alerts, phone calls, and emails would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord.

Out of the seven questions, the data for Table 4 for improving communication responses from landlord participants resulted in 85% of the landlord participants agreeing that improving

communication through technology would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord in DHA's HCVP.

**Table 5: Enhancing Customer Service Responses from Landlord Participants**

Enhancing Customer Service Category	Total	%
Electronic Documents and E-Signatures Paperless Platform	N=13	
Yes	10	77.00%
No	3	23.00%
Online Portal to Track Entire Lease-up Process to Payment	N=13	
Yes	11	85.00%
No	2	15.00%
Landlord Webpage & Web-based Fillable Forms	N=13	
Yes	13	100.00%
No	0	0.00%
Virtual Landlord Meetings & Landlords Only Phone Number	N=13	
Yes	11	85.00%
No	2	15.00%
Remote Video Inspections & Digital Pictures for Inspections	N=13	
Yes	9	69.00%
No	4	31.00%
Online Real-Time Inspection Portal with Live Updates	N=13	
Yes	11	85.00%
No	2	15.00%
Online Direct Deposit Payment Portal	N=13	
Yes	12	92.00%
No	1	8.00%
Marketing Units & Responding to Potential Tenants Online	N=13	
Yes	12	92.00%
No	1	8.00%

The sample in Table 5 described the enhancing customer responses from landlord participants of this research study. The descriptive statistics in Table 5 calculated percentages of responses related to Hypothesis 2 that landlords agreed that enhancing customer service through technology would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord.

The first question for Hypothesis 2 was focused on DHA implementing a paperless platform data. All 13 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 13 landlord participants, 77% of landlord participants agreed that if the DHA implemented a paperless platform that included submitting electronic documents and allowed electronic "e-signatures," it would streamline operations and retain their participation a landlord. Moreover, 23% of landlord participants disagreed.

The second question for Hypothesis 2 was focused on DHA having an online landlord portal data. All 13 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 13 landlord participants, 85% of landlord participants agreed that having an online landlord portal to track the entire lease-up process from start to finish, such as submitting the request for tenancy approval (RFTA), passing the inspection, signing the lease, and housing assistance payment (HAP) contract would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord. Moreover, 15% of landlord participants disagreed.

The third question for Hypothesis 2 was focused on DHA implementing a paperless platform data. All 13 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 13 landlord participants, 100% of landlord participants agreed that having a landlord webpage & web-based fillable forms would streamline operations and retain your participation as a landlord.

The fourth question for Hypothesis 2 was focused on DHA implementing virtual landlord meetings data. All 13 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 13 landlord

participants, 85% of landlord participants agreed that if the DHA implemented virtual landlord meetings and a direct phone number for landlords only would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord. Moreover, 15% of landlord participants disagreed.

The fifth question for Hypothesis 2 was focused on DHA using remote video inspections and digital pictures data. All 13 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 13 landlord participants, 69% of landlord participants agreed that using remote video inspections and digital pictures for inspections would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord. Moreover, 31% of landlord participants disagreed.

The sixth question for Hypothesis 2 was focused on DHA providing access to an online inspection portal data. All 13 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 13 landlord participants, 85% of landlord participants agreed that having access to "real-time" inspection information through an online inspection portal would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord. Moreover, 15% of landlord participants disagreed.

The seventh question for Hypothesis 2 was focused on DHA providing access to an online direct deposit payment portal data. All 13 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 13 landlord participants, 92% of landlord participants agreed that an online direct deposit payment portal with their payment information, an electronic 1099 for filing taxes, and details about future payments would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord. Moreover, 8% of landlord participants disagreed.

The eighth question for Hypothesis 2 was focused on DHA having access to an online landlord marketing software data. All 13 landlord participants responded to this question. Out of the 13 landlord participants, 92% of landlord participants agreed that if they could market units,

respond to potential tenants, and request rent increase online, this would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord. Moreover, 8% of landlord participants disagreed.

Out of the eight questions, the data for Table 5 enhancing customer service responses from landlord resulted in 86% of the landlord participants agreeing that enhancing customer service through technology would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord in DHA's HCVP.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter illustrated the results of the closed-ended survey of this descriptive statistics study. The percentages provided a valuable glimpse of the landlord participants' opinions of ways to streamline the HCVP through technology to retain their participation (Johnson, 2014). This study's descriptive statistics illustrated that the landlord participant is a significant stakeholder in the HCVP, whose opinion should be used to retain their participation (Garboden & Rosen, 2018; Rosen, 2020). This descriptive statistics study was used to bring attention to utilizing the landlords' thoughts and opinions to create effective solutions for policy changes for the public-private partnership of the HCVP (Ricucci).



## Chapter 5

### Discussion and Recommendations

The chapter is a summary and discussion of this descriptive statistics research study. The descriptive statistics study analyzed the landlords' thoughts and feelings regarding how streamlining the HCVP through technology would sustain their participation. The descriptive statistical data analysis for this research study was conducted through an online closed-ended survey. One of the study's aims was to describe data obtained from the landlord participants' survey to create policy alternatives to retain their participation in the HCVP (Newton & Rudestam, 2015; Riccucci, 2010). The online closed-ended survey research method collected the data to test each hypothesis for this research study and validate the research question. The online closed-ended survey approach was used to accomplish this descriptive statistics research study's research goals by describing the landlord population sample. The convenience sampling technique created an efficient mechanism for this descriptive statistical research study to obtain landlord participants.

This literature review of this research study took a deeper dive into the issues of ineffective operations of the HCVP and how the bureaucratic red tape has created additional optimization barriers for PHAs (Denhardt et al., 2014). Likewise, this research study's literature review expounded on how affordable housing programs have evolved from the Public Housing Act of 1937 that created the public housing program to the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 that created the HCVP to the present day (Desmond & Perkins, 2016; Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Muller, 2013). There has been minimal research focused on obtaining landlords' thoughts and opinions on streamlining the HCVP operations. However, there was a

gap in the research regarding the landlord's opinions on how to streamline the HCVP operations through technology to increase retention by removing implementing bureaucracy and implementing institutional change. The research question asked, Do landlords think that streamlining the HCVP operations through technology will increase their retention by removing institutional bureaucracy and implementing institutional change? The research question focused on two hypotheses, one on improving communication and the other on enhancing customer service, which is as follows:

### **Hypotheses**

1. Hypothesis 1: Landlords agree that improving Communication through technology would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord.
2. Hypothesis 2: Landlords agree that enhancing Customer Service through technology would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord.

### **Summary of Study**

To understand how something works, it must first be taken apart, starting with its history (North, 1990). Therefore, the descriptive statistics research methodology was used to highlight the public problem of landlords withdrawing from the HCVP, how this phenomenon affects public administration, input on public policy decisions, and illustrate why a cost-effective solution is required to retain landlord participation in the HCVP (Johnson, 2014). The closed-ended survey research method was used to obtain conclusions about the landlord population's opinions, thoughts, and feelings about addressing landlords' phenomenon of withdrawing from the HCVP by streamlining operations through technology to increase their retention (Babbie, 2007).

This study's approach was to add to the knowledge base and illustrate the correlation of how an institutional change of the PHA was a cause and effect of landlords' participation in the HCVP (Newton & Rudestam, 2015). The descriptive statistics methodology of this large PHA analyzed the social composition of the bureaucratic red tape of the HCVP by engaging with the larger landlord population by obtaining their opinions through surveys (Ricucci, 2010). Ricucci (2010) indicates that many descriptive statistics research studies in public administration took a quantitative empirical approach to address public problems and the phenomena. This empirical knowledge provided landlord participants' opinions through the descriptive statistics research study (Ricucci, 2010).

The descriptive statistics research study is an excellent illustration of why this phenomenon should be studied (Ricucci, 2010). This research study created the opportunity to be empirically tested from the positivist approach (North, 1990; Ricucci, 2010). Positivism acknowledges that the relationships between institutional change variables and the landlord's natural world can be categorized, validated, and expounded. Likewise, descriptive statistics provide an outlet for social thoughts in a survey (Hesse-Biber, 2017). As it relates to removing the institutional bureaucracy, this research study confirmed that PHAs should concentrate efforts and resources to build and manage relationships with landlords (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; North, 1990).

### **Application of Conceptual Framework to Findings**

This descriptive statistics research study's theoretical framework included North's institutional change theory (North, 1990). The application of the conceptual framework related to North's theory of institutional change to the findings of this descriptive statistics study addressed the gap in the research from the landlord's perspective (North, 1990). This

descriptive statistics research study explored landlords' opinions at the Dothan Housing Authority (DHA) regarding removing the bureaucratic red tape to increase their participation through streamlining operations through technology. The institutional change theory was used to understand how institutional bureaucracy influenced landlords' experiences and perceptions (North, 1990).

The research study was designed to address landlords' phenomenon of leaving the HCVP and add credibility to the institutional change theory (North, 1990; Rosen, 2020). Rosen (2020) indicated that private landlords' involvement marks a significant departure from older housing assistance models, such as public housing, where PHAs provided housing directly to tenants with no go-between. The rules of the game of the PHA are governed by the institutional bureaucracy, which has led to the phenomenon of landlords withdrawing from the HCVP (North, 1990). HUD initially created the HCVP to move away from the public housing model's bureaucracy and inefficiencies (Ferlie et al., 2005).

The neoclassical model PHA model operates and treats landlords as second-class citizens as if they work for the PHA or are residents of the housing authority (North, 1990; Varady et al., 2013; Varady et al., 2017). Many PHAs' organizational cultures resemble a modern-day spoil system built a neoclassical model that correlates with the landlord departure phenomenon (Denhardt et al., 2014; North, 1990). In contrast, the inability nor the foresight to attract, retain, and recruit the best and brightest amongst their staff has not been in the forefront (North, 1990). Therefore, these public housing institutions operate in a neoclassical bureaucratic environment that lacks efficiency and lack the technological capability to provide affordable housing services in the 21st century (HCV Landlord Strategies Technology, 2020; North, 1990).

## **Summary and Discussion of Results**

The sample for this research study consisted of 13 landlord participants who responded to the online closed-ended survey who were all participating in the DHA's HCVP. These landlord participants had an active HAP contract with DHA and had been a landlord with DHA for at least a year. As a product of the results from Chapter 4, 15 findings have surfaced as new empirical knowledge to the literature. The summary and discussion of results of this descriptive research study included optimizing processes by investing in technology to increase landlord satisfaction and engagement by the PHAs, improving communication, and enhancing customer service that cultivates better PHA-landlord relationships (HCV Landlord Strategies Technology, 2020; HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020). Out of the seven questions, the data for Table 4 for improving communication responses from landlord participants resulted in 85% of the landlord participants agreeing that improving communication through technology would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord in DHA's HCVP. Out of the eight questions, the data for Table 5 enhancing customer service responses from landlord resulted in 86% of the landlord participants agreeing that enhancing customer service through technology would streamline operations and retain their participation as a landlord in DHA's HCVP.

### **Finding 1: Social Media, Text Messages, Landlord Hotline & Emails**

The data presented in Table 4 affirms related research in the HCV Landlord Technology Strategies (2020) that DHA should invest in technology to streamline its operations to respond to landlord inquiries to develop relationships with landlords promptly. The findings in Table 4 validate that improving communication between landlords and the DHA through alternative methods such as social media, text messaging, and emails would retain landlord participation in the HCVP. Represented in Table 4, the results affirm that landlords would embrace alternative

methods of communication; many landlords complained about not being able to reach staff in the HCVP department or PHA main office and that no one would return their call (Cunningham et al., 2018; HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019). The ability to receive time-sensitive information through email, social media, or a text-message is a creative mechanism to retain landlord participation in the HCVP by implementing a 21<sup>st</sup>-century streamlined operations approach by DHA (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020).

### **Finding 2: Virtual Landlord Liaison**

The findings presented in Table 4 validate the Cunningham et al. (2018) research that the landlord liaison position can cultivate relationships between landlords and PHAs. The data in Table 4 affirms the study by Cunningham et al. (2018) that the DHA should invest in a virtual landlord liaison position that could create a virtual platform focused on retaining and recruiting new landlords. The virtual position will serve as the single point of contact devoted solely to landlords to provide customer service and communication about their units or any updates regarding the DHA's HCVP (Cunningham et al., 2018).

This evidence, presented in Table 4, affirm the Cunningham et al. (2018) research that the landlord liaison position is a rare position at PHAs and that having a point of contact is crucial to building and managing the relationship between landlords and DHA, ultimately changing landlord perceptions about the HCVP. Table 4 findings substantiate Varady et al. (2017) and Cunningham et al. (2018) research that PHAs have not devoted resources or designated staff to landlord marketing or outreach activities but have consistent issues with landlord hosting sessions that ultimately affect HCVP goals. The virtual landlord liaison would be critical to sustaining the public-private partnership between DHA and landlords.

### **Finding 3: Online and Virtual Training for Landlords and Tenants**

The data in Table 4 affirmed research in the HCV Landlord Strategies Technology (2020) and Nisar et al. (2018) that DHA should offer virtual landlord orientations for new and current landlords. DHA should analyze the administrative feasibility to require new landlords to attend a virtual landlord orientation to assure success in the HCVP and reduce potential future conflicts or misunderstandings between the landlord, tenant, and policies of the DHA. This supports the related research by Tighe & Mueller (2013) that the misconceptions and preconceived notions of first-time landlords of how the HCVP. This would also address the misunderstanding that DHA is the landlord's property manager. This finding in Table 4 correlates with the research by Garboden et al. (2018) that DHA needs to provide as much education and information at the beginning for new landlords to manage satisfaction and expectations related to the HCVP.

The data in Table 4 illustrates that DHA should launch an online landlord workshop series. This would create innovative ways to encourage the interest of the local real estate market, apartment associations, and property management companies (HCV Landlord Strategies Technology, 2020). This would allow DHA to develop partnerships with other real estate and property management professionals in the local area to provide free virtual training workshops (Nisar et al., 2018; Varady et al., 2017). The findings in Table 4 justify the research in the HCV Landlord Strategies (2020) that DHA should also facilitate landlord sessions on live social media channels such as Facebook or YouTube to create efficient and effective delivery methods. Additionally, recorded online training should be made available on DHA's webpage (HCV Landlord Strategies Technology, 2020; HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020). These educational workshops would create opportunities for engagement with landlords through questions and answers that will ultimately enhance DHA's customer service (Varady et al., 2017). This data in

Table 4 affirms the research that when landlords and voucher holders (tenants) are educated about the rules and regulations of the HCVP, this helps improve communication and build a better relationship between the landlords, voucher holder, and the PHA (Garboden et al., 2018; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019).

#### **Finding 4: Online Newsletter**

The data presented in Table 4 validate Varady et al. (2017) research that the landlords are often out of the loop of policy updates needed to have a prosperous business. Evidence produced in Table 4 correlates with research in the HCV Landlord Strategies Technology (2020) publication that an online newsletter sent to a landlord's portal will improve communication between landlords and PHAs. Research also suggests that an online newsletter will help landlords and PHAs speak the same language, leading to effective communication and removing the bureaucratic red tape (HCV Landlord Strategies Technology, 2020). The day-to-day communication and management of the HCVP have changed dramatically based on the COVID-19 pandemic, and the online newsletter would help DHA communicate effectively with current landlords and also allow the DHA to recruit new landlords through an online public on its website (HCV Landlord Strategies Technology 2020; HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020).

#### **Finding 5: Virtual Landlord Advisory Committee**

The findings in Table 4 correlate with the research in Varady et al. (2017), indicating that landlords are left of the loop of policy and procedure updates, nor are landlords asked how PHA changes will affect their business practices. The results in Table 4 validate the research in the HUD Evidence Matters (2019) publication that a virtual landlord advisory committee would allow landlords to provide their opinions and thoughts on DHA policy updates and procedure changes to strengthen the public-private partnership. Although some landlords cannot meet in



person based on the COVID-19 pandemic and other obligations, whereas in-person meetings are limited, the virtual landlord advisory committee can still meet to discuss opportunities and challenges of DHA's HCVP (HCV Landlord Strategies Technology 2020; HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020). The DHA should start a list of potential virtual landlord committee members that are a collaborative network of apartment complex managers, private landlords, property managers, and nonprofit and community housing providers (Denhardt et al., 2014; Ferlie et al., 2005; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; Kettl, 2002).

### **Finding 6: Virtual Landlord-Tenant Conflict Resolution Meetings**

As exhibited in Table 4, these results affirm the HCV Landlord Education and Outreach Strategies (2020) publication that landlords think that the PHA is their property manager. In comparison, voucher holders (tenants) believe that the PHA is their legal advocate. During the HQS inspection, landlords are penalized for tenant-related damages, and this is deterrence for recruitment and retention efforts (HUD Landlord Symposium, 2019). However, when the DHA does not intercede in to assist the landlord with tenant-related issues such as tenant-related damages, this affects the relationship and causes landlords to withdraw from participating in the HCVP.

As noted in Table 4, these findings substantiate research the HUD Landlord Symposium (2019) publication that when lease-related problems arise, the DHA should hold virtual conflict resolution meetings to address tenant-landlord disputes to validate landlord concerns. When examining the data results in Table 4, the results authenticate the research in Varady et al. (2017) and Nisar et al. (2018) that landlords perceive the public-private partnership of the HCVP as a two-sided partnership between PHAs and voucher holders only. Virtual landlord-tenant conflict

resolution meetings will create an environment where landlords feel that someone is in their corner and that their public-private partnership is neutral and fair (Nisar et al., 2018).

#### **Finding 7: Real-Time Inspection Status Notifications**

The findings in Table 4 correlate with the research in the Nisar et al. (2018), HCV Landlord Technology Strategies (2020), and HUD Evidence Matters (2019) publications that simplifying the inspection process by removing the red tape and effectively communicating the inspection status through technology would enhance customer service. A real-time inspection notification software would remove the ambiguity and decrease landlords' withdrawal choosing not to lease their properties through the HCVP (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies). Represented in Table 4, the findings affirm that the research HCV Landlord Technology Strategies (2020) that real-time inspection notification system that emails, sends a text message, and calls landlords instead of waiting on inspectors leads to satisfied landlords. The daunting task of figuring out if the HQS inspection passed or failed by mail compared to logging into an inspection software or landlord portal would be an essential investment for landlord retention efforts for the DHA (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019).

#### **Finding 8: Landlord Portal for Electronic Documents and E-Signatures Paperless**

The data presented in Table 5 illustrate that DHA should create a landlord portal that allows landlords to sign forms electronically, such as the HAP contract and leases, for the DHA to fully embraced an optimized HCVP. The DHA website should have a page on its homepage for a landlord portal where landlords can view direct deposits, send and submit electronic documents without coming to the HCVP office will increased landlord satisfaction and retention. The findings in Table 5 affirms the research in the HCV Landlord Technology Strategies (2020)

that if DHA the return on investment in technology would allow the DHA to provide a seamless transition of the paradigm shift of moving from paper to the cloud that would increase landlord retention and implement institutional change.

### **Finding 9: Landlord Portal to Track Entire Lease-up Process to Payment**

The findings in Table 5 illustrates that the DHA should invest in an online portal that allows landlords to track their lease-up process online. The data presented in Table 5 also affirms the research in Cunningham et al. (2018), Rosen (2020), and the HUD Evidence Matters (2019) publication that the landlord portal is a modern-day housing software tool to monitor the entire process online would enhance customer service of the DHA. DHA's ability to track the whole lease-up process online should incorporate dashboards to track metrics, outcomes, trends, and other key performance indicators (KPIs) that will lead to improving communication, enhancing customer service, and landlord retention (HCV Landlord Strategies, 2020; Threatt, 2020).

### **Finding 10: Landlord Webpage & Web-based Fillable Forms**

Represented in Table 5, the results demonstrate that DHA should invest in a new robust website that includes a landlord webpage and web-based fillable forms (HCV Landlord Strategies Technology, 2020; Threatt, 2020). This new responsive website that is described in Table 5 affirms the literature in Nisar et al. (2018), Threatt (2020) online article, and HCV Landlord Strategies (2020) publication that DHA should also invest in a responsive website that chatting online with landlord stakeholders and web-based software that can be accessed through the website that includes portals for landlords. The findings in Table 5 are reflective of the New Public Management model where the DHA must implement a 21st-century technological approach of providing affordable housing services by streamlining operations to recruit and retain

landlord participation in the HCVP (HCV Landlord Strategies, 2020; HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; Threatt, 2020).

### **Finding 11: Virtual Landlord Meetings & Landlord Only Phone Numbers**

The findings in Table 5 highlight that landlords are interested in working with the DHA without coming into the office. Therefore, DHA should invest in a digital platform that focuses on telecommunication to offer virtual landlord meetings. Table 5 results also indicate that landlords would like to communicate through a "landlord only" phone number that suits their specific needs, which affirms the research in the HUD Evidence Matters (2019) publication, instead of going through a phone tree or numerous transfers at the DHA. The changing HCVP climate compels the DHA to be more cost-effective and innovative, as is reflected in research that Table 5 substantiates in the HCV Landlord Technology Strategies (2020). Likewise, DHA must proactively invest in the latest technological advances to retain landlord participation.

### **Finding 12: Remote Video Inspections & Digital Pictures for Inspections**

As evidenced in Table 5, demonstrate the research in HCV Landlord Technology Strategies (2020) that simplifying the inspection process would increase landlord satisfaction and retention with the HCVP. PHAs have discretion under the Housing Opportunities through Modernization Act (HOTMA) and CARES Act flexibilities and waivers to perform a remote virtual inspection. The findings in Table 5 illustrate that the benefits of the flexibility in the HUD PIH Notice 2020-29 (2020) for the HCVP allows landlords to submit digital photos of repairs and DHA can perform remote video inspections at the landlords' unit based on the COVID-19 is an excellent way to enhance customer service and retain landlord participation (HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020). The alternative inspection practices accommodate landlords, leading to better

relationships between PHAs and landlords by removing the bureaucratic red tape and implementing institutional change (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; North, 1990).

### **Finding 13: Online Real-Time Inspection Portal with Live Updates**

As reported in Table 5, the finding correlates with the information in the HCV Landlord Strategies Technology (2020) and HUD PIH Notice 2020-29 (2020) publication that DHA could do the courtesy of scheduling a date and time for the landlord to be available for an inspection through an online inspection portal. Likewise, the inspection itself and results would be available in real-time online immediately after completing the inspection (Cunningham et al., 2018; HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020; HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020). The findings in Table 5 validate research by Nisar et al. (2018) that investing in an online real-time inspection portal where the landlord can monitor the entire HQS inspection process online would enhance customer service, improve communication, and cultivate a better relationship between the DHA and landlords.

### **Finding 14: Online Direct Deposit Payment Portal**

The data reported in Table 5 affirms the research in the HUD Evidence Matters (2019) publication that DHA should make HAP payments through direct deposits, and landlords should have access to a landlord with their online payment information. As illustrated in Table 5, the online direct deposit payment portal will enhance customer service where landlords do not have to wait on checks in the mail, come by the HCVP office to pick up checks or worry about payments that were lost in the mail (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020). As evidence in Table 5, the results correlate with the research in the HUD Landlord Symposium (2019) publication that making payments through direct deposits instead of issuing paper checks would reduce the DHA budget line items as it relates to lost mail and the cost of postage. The ability to

efficiently match tenant HAP payments, dates, and units while simultaneously quality controlling for incorrect payments correlates with landlords receiving online payment information is a way to enhance customer for the DHA (HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020).

### **Finding 15: Marketing Units & Responding to Potential Tenants Online**

As illustrated in Table 5, support the findings in the HCV Landlord Strategies Technology (2020) publication that the DHA should invest in comprehensive marketing and rent reasonableness software that will allow landlords and voucher holders to communicate electronically. The DHA should purchase the Go Section 8 software ([www.gosection8.com](http://www.gosection8.com)) and create a direct link for landlords to list their properties on the DHA website (HCV Landlord Strategies Technology, 2020). The data results in Table 5 demonstrate that the research in Freeman & Li (2012) and Varady et al. (2017) that the efficient expediting of rent increases enhances customer service, which leads to landlord retention.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study's limitation was the online survey that was limited to landlords who had email addresses only. Whereas the DHA's database had 222 landlords, only 127 landlords had email addresses, and the response rate was 21% (Babbie, 2007). Additionally, if the survey would have been mailed or allowed to run for the entire month for those landlord respondents who did not get a chance to respond, this would have created better response results (Babbie, 2007). Furthermore, the DHA operates as a neoclassical PHA that is still heavily dependent on brick-and-mortar, face-to-face communication, and paper-driven interactions (North, 1990). Likewise, many landlords are not familiar with communicating with DHA by email, and landlords are accustomed to mail and phone call communication only.

Consequently, the online survey was sent the week of the 2020 Presidential election, and this variable could have been a barrier to responses and lack of responses. An additional limitation of the study was the reluctance of landlords to respond to the survey because they did not recognize the email address generated from the Qualtrics software. Another limitation of the study was the closed-ended questions compared to a combination of both open-ended and closed-ended questions would have changed the responses (Babbie, 2007). Also, the closed-ended survey may have missed some significant responses (Babbie, 2007).

### **Limitations in Methodology**

The percentages of this descriptive statistics research study emphasized the phenomenon for this population sample. The lack of responses illustrated the limitation of the study's methodology of quantitative with the research approach focused on descriptive statistics (Johnson, 2014). However, it is essential to remember is that while simple descriptive statistics are often used to tell a story, they do not necessarily capture the complexity of the situation, nor do they translate into simple policy solutions (Johnson, 2014). In contrast, a phenomenology research study would have captured landlords' lived experience participating in the HCVP at DHA (Ricucci, 2010). Also, the ability to conceptualize the landlord participants' lived experiences to explain the phenomena and how landlords felt in their own words about streamlining the HCVP through technology to retain their retention (Ricucci, 2010). An interview would be a cost-effective method to understand the landlord participants' worldview and their perception of leasing through the HCVP (Garboden & Rosen, 2020). Interviews also provide an excellent scenario to view the social, political, bureaucratic, and cultural aspects of the PHA through the lens of the landlord participants' experiences and perceptions (Garboden & Rosen, 2018).

### **Limitations in Analysis**

Although the online closed-end survey was collected and analyzed in the Qualtrics software for efficiency purposes for this descriptive statistics research study, there were limitations for the percentages data analysis and interpretation. The limitations of the descriptive statistics only allowed for the data to be illustrated in percentages compared to inferential statistics that would have allowed the researcher to make predictions (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). In comparison, this research study data analysis focused on describing the data related to streamlining operations through technology by landlord participant responses (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). In contrast, the inferential statistics would have focused on making generalizations about the landlord population related to streamlining operations through technology by landlord participant responses (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Moreover, the data analysis is also limited by not investigating the meaningful relationships between hypotheses and the variables that can be generalized to the larger landlord population (Rudestam & Newton, 2015).

### **Limitations in Generalizability**

Another limitation of the study was the length of the survey itself and the number of questions in the survey (Babbie, 2007). The questions could have been seen all at once or given as the landlord participant completes each question one at a time (Babbie, 2007). Although current landlord participants were vital respondents to this online survey, their experience is limited to a specific portion of the larger landlord population. Therefore, making it difficult to place a generalization for the entire landlord population based on the limitations for external validity (Rossi et al., 1999).



## **Implications of Future Educational Research**

Although the researcher could have used a different sampling technique to cast a wider variety for the survey, future research should consider the length of the survey and the capacity of those answering the survey. Previous research shows that many landlords who lease affordable units to private renters but do not rent to voucher holders have participated in the program at some point in the past (Rosen, 2020). The majority of landlords had a negative experience with the PHA that drove them away from the HCVP (Rosen, 2020). Based on past negative experiences and broken relationships, landlords are still not interested in working with PHAs and knowing that they have to deal with the bureaucratic red tape (Nisar et al., 2018; Varady et al., 2017). Future research questions should focus on obtaining the opinions of former landlords who withdrew from the HCVP because of past negative experiences of ways to streamline operations to reclaim their participation.

Future research should also focus on the qualitative research study approach of phenomenology. The phenomenology research study approach could use a recorded interview as the instrument to investigate the landlord participants' observations, gestures, and direct quotations based on their perceptions (Rudestam and Newton, 2015). Garboden and Rosen (2018) explain that the interview is subjective speech that illustrates how landlord participants view the world around them and how this is a fundamental method to observe their insight into their worldview. Interpretivism uses a bottom-up approach that allowed analyzed semi-structured interviews, body language, gestures, tone of voice, and other observations to uncover thoughts, feelings, free will, and empathize with the participants studied to interpret the data qualitatively (Rudestam and Newton, 2015). The interpretivism approach believes that the social world is continuously being constructed through social interactions and consciousness

(Rudestam and Newton, 2015). As it relates to data analysis, the open-ended questions of a qualitative methodology with an interview technique could develop themes to saturate the research.

Many landlords are still refusing to accept vouchers because of institutional bureaucracy regardless of the Source of Income (SOI) law and monetary penalties (Cunningham et al. 2018). The SOI issues have created additional landlord refusal to participate in the HCVP and caused landlords to voluntarily agree to pay fines to avoid dealing with the institutional bureaucracy associated with the PHA (Cunningham et al., 2018). This cause and effect of the SOI laws have created unintended consequences of pricing out the voucher holders who cannot afford to lease units in high opportunity neighborhoods and other affordable areas (Cunningham et al., 2018; Richardson, 2019). Future research questions should focus on how the SOI laws being developed throughout the country will create unintended consequences for voucher holders.

According to HUD, DHA is designated as a high performer based on scoring a 135 out of 150 for its 2019 SEMAP score (Varady et al., 2013; Varady et al., 2017). Ironically, the DHA scored 5 out of 5 points for SEMAP Indicator #7 for Expanding Housing Opportunities (McClure, 2013; Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). According to HUD, DHA looks good on paper, which means that DHA has a strong landlord base. Moreover, most of the voucher holders under the DHA's administration live in the two poorest neighborhoods (zip codes of 36301, 36303) in the City of Dothan based on the DHA's housing software database (City of Dothan Affordable Housing Study, 2018). These two zip codes have created “virtual public housing” for the HCVP operations for DHA based on the concentrations of voucher holders in these areas (McClure, 2013). Landlords have the discretion to invest and lease where voucher holders cluster (Rosen, 2014).

Therefore, this means that DHA did not receive the bonus five (5) points for Deconcentration Indicator, and the HCVP is not living up to its intended purpose. Moreover, many PHAs do not obtain the bonus "5" (five) points for deconcentration points that are associated with SEMAP based on voucher holders leasing units outside of the poverty concentration areas (McClure, 2013; Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013). McClure (2013) explained that the HCVP offers a choice to voucher holders, a small percentage to live in high-opportunity neighborhoods. HUD grades PHAs on how they deconcentrate poverty through the regulatory mandates of SEMAP annually (McClure, 2013). If the PHA meets the "status quo" (satisfice), the agency, like DHA, will receive all five (5) points under Indicator #7 Expanding Housing Opportunities. This illustrates why the HCVP has struggled to live up to its purpose of deconcentration poverty and has an issue with recruiting landlords in low-poverty areas (McClure, 2013). Future research questions should ask what zip codes landlords prefer to invest in and why voucher holders concentrate in the same "high poverty" zip codes in the City of Dothan.

### **Recommendations**

An optimized HCVP maximizes both effectiveness and efficiency: maximizing the number of families served while minimizing rent burden through cost-effective solutions with the PHA's financial constraints (HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020). The operation of an optimized HCVP is a significant challenge for PHA under its current neoclassical model (HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020; North, 1990). However, an optimized successful HCVP is contingent upon constraint monitoring of numerous relevant variables (HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020). Ultimately, there is a wide range of variables determining both HCVP upon leasing and spending rest, some of which are in the PHA's control, though many are not (HUD PIH Notice 2020-29,

2020). Landlord satisfaction and engagement, streamlining operations, investing in technology, enhancing customer service, improving customer service, and simplifying the inspections process is in the PHA's discretionary control (HUD PIH Notice 2020-29, 2020).

### **Policy Recommendation 1: Permanent Flexibilities and Waivers**

The flexibilities and waivers of the CARES Act must be used as a catalyst for housing policy reform for policymakers by permanently removing the bureaucratic red tape to increase retention of landlords (Threatt, 2020). PHAs must implement best-practices by streamlining their operations through the investment in technology to retain landlords through institutional change (HCV Landlord Strategies Technology, 2020; Threatt, 2020). PHA senior staff must show HUD and Congress how these statutory waivers and flexibilities must be made permanent public policy for the HCVP by creating innovative solutions to sustain and elevate their operations with the use of technology (Threatt, 2020). PHAs must also utilize these regulatory waivers and flexibility of the CARES Act funding to streamline their operations by the removing institutional bureaucracy to recruit new landlords to participate in the HCVP (Threatt, 2020). There must be a paradigm shift in the policymaking process when it comes to affordable housing policy reform related to the HCVP; specifically, as it relates to regulations, mandates, and funding allocations (North, 1990). Garboden (2018) study indicated a correlation between streamlining operations of the HCVP and creating opportunities to recruit and retain landlords (Richardson, 2019). The PHA must take this an opportunity to take the failures of yesterday and turn them into the successes of tomorrow by removing institutional bureaucracy and implementing institutional change at their housing agencies (Threatt, 2020).

PHAs have discretion under the Housing Opportunities through Modernization Act (HOTMA) and CARES Act flexibilities and waivers to perform remote virtual inspection or

allow the voucher holder to move into a landlord's unit before it passed the required HQS inspection. These flexibilities and waivers streamline operations based on the COVID-19 pandemic for landlords and voucher holders (HCV Landlord Strategies Technology, 2020; Threatt, 2020). The CARES funding also allowed PHAs to spend the funding on activities that includes necessary updates to information technology and computer hardware and software to carry out HCVP activities, including recruiting and retaining landlords (HCV Landlord Strategies Technology, 2020; HUD PIH Notice 2020-18, 2020; PHADA Advocate 12-9-2020, 2020). PHAs have an opportunity to invest in modern-day technology by launching a responsive website, utilizing web-based software, online portals for landlords and voucher holders, a text-message alert system, and creating a social media platform to improve communication and enhance better customer service (HCV Landlord Strategies Technology, 2020; Threatt, 2020). Moreover, this will allow PHAs to be more responsive to the landlords and increase landlord satisfaction and engagement (Denhardt et al., 2014). By applying the New Public Service (NPS) and New Public Management (NPM) principles, the PHA can be more responsive to landlords and voucher holders (Denhardt et al., 2014; Threatt, 2020).

Ultimately, this could help rebrand the PHA and remove the neoclassical institutional bureaucratic reputation of the slow processing "Section 8" stigma to retain landlords to continue leasing through the "HCVP" (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; North, 1990). The paradigm shift of PHAs doing business from a brick and mortar platform to moving from paper to the cloud by embracing an online platform based on the COVID-19 pandemic creates the opportunity to recruit and retain landlords to participate in the HCVP (Threatt, 2020). The CARES Act allowed PHAs to optimize the management of the HCVP by increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of landlord satisfaction and engagement by investing in technology (PHADA Advocate 12-9-

2020, 2020). This will allow the PHA to function like the private-sector function as a corporation in terms of affordable housing and voucher management that receives government funds based on its quasi-governmental status (Schwartz, 2015; Tighe & Mueller, 2013).

## **Policy Recommendation 2: Administrative Fee Policy Reform**

Although the HCVP is complex and confusing, one of the primary reasons for the voucher program's success is its flexibility (Schwartz, 2015). However, even the most successful PHAs encounter challenges efficiently and timely operating the HCVP (Schwartz, 2015). The biggest concern and challenge to overcome is the substantial reduction in administrative fees (Schwartz, 2015). HUD's failure to provide adequate administrative fees significantly impede and disrupt HCVP operations and have a negative effect on the accomplishment of agency priorities and goals (Schwartz, 2015). The Administrative Fee Study in 2015 indicated that this was the problem with fully optimizing the HCVP because of the failed full allocation (PHADA Advocate 12-23-2020, 2020).

The burdensome administrative work of maintaining the waiting list, signing HAP contracts, issuing payments to landlords, processing lease-ups, completing HQS inspections, and complying with all of the HUD regulations is a daunting task for PHAs that operate under a neoclassical bureaucratic model (PHADA Advocate 12-23-2020, 2020). The administrative fee pays for the staff and contracts to effectively manage the HCVP while complying with the neoclassical institutional bureaucratic HUD (PHADA Advocate 12-9-2020, 2020). The administrative fee has fluctuated between 70%-81% of full allocation over the past eight years (PHADA Advocate 12-23-2020, 2020). PHADA (2020) indicated that many policymakers did not understand what the administrative fee does for the PHA, landlords, and voucher holders. The continued failure to fully fund the administrative fee illustrates that policymakers

do not understand the complexities of the HCVP or how an optimized HCVP must function (PHADA Advocate 12-23-2020, 2020).

The administrative fee flexibility combined with the CARES Act waivers can assist the PHA with streamlining operations to provide housing choices for voucher holders and landlord recruitment and retention outreach (HUD PIH Notice 2020-18, 2020; PHADA Advocate 12-9-2020, 2020). Congress enacted the CARES Act to allow the administrative fee to be utilized to retain landlords through technology endeavors of the PHAs (HUD PIH Notice 2020-18, 2020; PHADA Advocate 12-9-2020, 2020). There is an essential need to invest in technology to streamline operations based on the lack of HUD funding for the administrative fee (Cunningham et al., 2018; HCV Landlord Technology Strategies, 2020).

The CARES Act funding also allowed PHA to utilize the administrative fee for landlord incentives such as security deposit, vacancy payments, damage mitigation payments, and incentive for new lease-ups for both new and current landlords (HUD PIH Notice 2020-18, 2020; PHADA Advocate 12-9-2020, 2020). In response to the COVID-19, this flexibility must become permanent public policy to optimize the management of the HCVP based on the flexibility with the administrative fee (PHADA Advocate 12-9-2020, 2020). Instead of being reactive because of the pandemic, HUD and Congress must be proactive to put the administrative fee to good work for voucher holders and landlords (PHADA Advocate 12-9-2020, 2020).

Furthermore, PHAs need to recruit and retain landlords to participate in the HCVP to address the phenomenon of landlord withdrawal (PHADA Advocate 12-9-2020, 2020). PHADA (2020) requested that PHAs utilize a portion of the administrative fee to recruit and retain landlords under a landlord liaison position (PHADA Advocate 12-9-2020, 2020). PHADA

(2020) also indicated that HUD and Congress must amend the public policy to allow PHAs to use the administrative fee reserve for other housing purposes such as landlord marketing and outreach activities. This will become a severe issue for President-elect Biden's housing agenda under his universal voucher program if the administrative fee is not fully funded, along with the phenomenon of the landlord withdrawal from the HCVP (PHADA Advocate 12-23-2020, 2020).

### **Policy Recommendation 3: Universal Voucher Program**

As the country plans to move forward with the universal voucher program under President-elect Biden's housing plan (PHADA Advocate 12-23-2020, 2020). Even though the universal voucher program proposed by President-elect Biden sounds good in theory but reality, without institutional change of the PHA, this is just another policy solution that looks good on paper (PHADA Advocate 12-23-2020, 2020). Desmond and Perkins (2016) affirm that a universal voucher program is a great tool to address the affordable housing crisis. However, the neoclassical PHA model cannot manage the current size of the HCVP effectively and efficiently (North, 1990).

Congress, HUD, and PHAs must acknowledge that the HCVP is heavily flawed and requires a cost-effective policy solution to repair the broken relationship for this public-private partnership with landlords to live up to its intended purpose (HUD Evidence Matters 2019; PHADA Advocate 12-23-2020, 2020). Therefore, the phenomenon of the landlord's withdrawal from the HCVP must be studied further to address the significant challenge of the universal voucher program policy solution (PHADA Advocate 12-23-2020, 2020). The Biden administration plans to increase the voucher budget from \$23-billion-dollars to \$64-billion-dollar federal a year, with a total investment of \$640 billion per year HCVP (PHADA Advocate 12-23-2020, 2020). Nonetheless, the universal voucher program agenda item and the conversion of



public housing to the HCVP platform under Section 22 Streamlined Voucher Conversion (SVC) and the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) programs require significant policy reform to retain and recruit landlords. Moreover, comprehensive housing policy reform is needed to solve the affordable housing crisis that removes institutional bureaucracy and embraces holistic institutional change to address landlords' phenomenon of withdrawing from participating in the HCVP (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; North, 1990).

#### **Policy Recommendation 4: Permanent Landlord Incentives**

Over the last decade, 110,000 landlords have withdrawn from the HCVP because of the institutional bureaucracy (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). This phenomenon has negatively affected housing opportunities for voucher holders, and when landlords leave the HCVP, this jeopardizes the supply of affordable housing (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019). The cost to participate in the HCVP is a conscious decision for landlords of PHAs, and the price of bureaucracy is too great a cost for both landlords and voucher holders to continue to pay (PHADA Advocate 12-9-2020, 2020). Policymakers must critically evaluate policy alternatives to improve landlord retention and recruitment to counter the withdrawal phenomenon (Richardson, 2019).

Policymakers, HUD, and PHA leaders and officials can no longer have tunnel vision, turn a blind eye, and ignore the significant flaws within the HCVP (Denhardt et al., 2014; Schwartz, 2015). Schwartz (2015) affirmed the "the grand delusion" premise in Chester Hartman's book *Housing and Social Policy*, published in 1975, a year after the implementation of the HCVP, that the program falsely believes that the "carrot on the stick" guaranteed rent legitimately guarantees landlord participation. Rosen (2020) alluded to Hartman and his book, where he called the HCVP the grand delusion of focusing on the guaranteed rent to attract and retain landlords is

intrinsically flawed. As stated previously, the “satisfice” of relationships with landlords to be a higher performer reduces the number of affordable housing units for voucher holders, creates additional barriers for voucher holders to lease in low-poverty areas, and entraps voucher holders leasing in high-poverty neighborhoods only (HUD Evidence Matters, 2019; McClure, 2013; Riccucci, 2010; Rosen, 2020; Schwartz, 2015). Varady et al. (2017) explain the gap in landlord marketing research and dedicated outreach efforts for investors in high-opportunity areas.

Garboden et al. (2018) recommended that HUD and Congress create waivers to allow local PHAs to encourage and provide incentives for landlords to participate in the HCVP. The HCV Mobility Demonstration Program requires a dedicated focus on recruiting and retaining these demand-side stakeholders with landlord-friendly incentives, marketing strategies, aggressive outreach, and innovative approaches (Varady et al., 2013). This is a great policy solution and policy alternative to address landlords' phenomenon withdrawing from the HCVP; however, the HCVP is dependent on the demand side actor landlords to make this policy solution work.

The Housing Choice Voucher Mobility Demonstration Act and Family Stability and Opportunity Vouchers Act are excellent legislation for landlord marketing and outreach. The Opportunity Starts at Home campaign is a great initiative to recruit and retain landlords. However, without willing landlords to participate in the HCVP, these are public policy solutions that look good on paper (Garboden et al., 2018; Varady et al., 2017). The Creating Moves to Opportunity (CMTO) study revealed that without engaged landlords, the landlord marketing initiatives and incentives are pointless (Bergman et al., 2020). The universal landlords and opportunity landlords currently being discussed with the Moving to Work (MTW) Expansion

Landlord Incentives for Cohort #4 will enhance the current HCV Mobility Demonstration initiative based on the emphasis on landlord recruitment and experimenting with landlord incentives (Richardson, 2019). Again, this will draw a lot of attention but lack the fundamental premise of institutional reform to recruit and retain landlords could create another policy solution that looks good on paper (Bergman et al., 2020; Varady et al., 2017).

### **Conclusion**

While the landlord participants' response rate was less than anticipated, this research study's goal was to evaluate landlords' opinions on retaining their participation by cultivating this public-private partnership. This research study picked up where previous research left off and addressed the gap in the research by obtaining landlord participants' opinions and thoughts on improving the HCVP to keep them satisfied and engaged. This research study aimed to use a closed-ended survey to obtain landlords' opinions and thoughts on streamlining operations through technology to increase their retention. Moreover, this descriptive statistics study aimed to address the research gap from landlords' opinions of ways to increase their retention in the HCVP by streamlining operations through technology. The descriptive statistics research study added to the empirical knowledge base by addressing the research gap and creating policy solution recommendations for the HCVP.

This study utilized quantitative methods of descriptive statistics to establish why implementing institutional change by removing the bureaucratic red tape to increase landlord retention in the HCVP. The descriptive statistics research study used a positivism approach to understand landlord participants' opinions, thoughts, and perceptions of who felt satisfied or dissatisfied with the HCVP (Van De Ven, 2013). This quantitative approach used positivism to achieve an objective goal of understanding the landlord participant's opinions on the

phenomenon of their withdrawing from participating in the HCVP (Ricucci, 2010). The study used a positivism approach to focus on the objective experience and interactions to understand the challenges and opportunities of landlord participants leasing through the HCVP (Ricucci, 2010; Newton & Rudestam, 2015). The positivist approach was used to discover new knowledge to fill the research gap through this quantitative study (Hesse-Biber, 2017).

The purpose of this study was accomplished by obtaining the opinions of landlord participants on how to streamline operations HCVP at the Dothan Housing Authority through technology by removing institutional bureaucracy and implementing institutional change. The removal of the bureaucratic red tape will develop better relationships between landlords and DHA, which will lead to affordable housing choices for voucher holders. In general, PHAs must recognize the landlord as real partners and value their time by streamlining their operations to keep landlords satisfied and retain their participation in the HCVP (Nisar et al., 2018). Through this descriptive statistics study, policymakers will have policy alternatives recommendations based on "technological innovations, new private-sector approaches, political pressures, reinventing government strategies, and other factors" to streamline the HCVP operations (Ricucci, 2010, p. 99). In conclusion, this research study was able to a). add empirical knowledge to the field of public administration, b). recommend policy solutions to address the public problem of landlords withdrawing from participating in the HCVP, c). provide cost-effective solutions for the DHA to streamline their operations through technology, and d). identify ways to increase landlord retention by removing institutional bureaucracy and implementing institutional change.

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## Appendix A- Letter of Support from Dothan Housing Authority



**September 11, 2020**

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
West Chester University  
Filano Hall  
West Chester, PA 19383

Re: Dissertation Letter of Support

To Whom This May Concern:

Please accept this letter that Michael C. Threatt has permission to use Dothan Housing Authority's data in his dissertation research.

If you have any questions regarding this letter of approval, please contact me, Samuel P. Crawford at [scrawford@dothanhousing.org](mailto:scrawford@dothanhousing.org).

Respectfully,

*Samuel P. Crawford*  
Samuel P. Crawford (Sep 11, 2020 13:48 CDT)

Samuel P. Crawford  
Executive Director

Dothan Housing Authority, 602 South Lena Street, Dothan, AL 36301

## Appendix B – Participant Invitation Emails

### Invitation 1

Dear Landlord:

My name is Michael C. Threatt, and I am a doctoral candidate at West Chester University Pennsylvania (WCUPA) in the Department of Public Policy and Administration. I am the principal investigator for a research project on Using Input from Landlords Participating in the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) to Streamline Operations through Technology to Increase Retention.

I am sending this email today to ask you to consider participating in this research project. The goal of this study to obtain input from landlords of how to streamline HCVP operations through technology to increase retention by removing bureaucratic red tape. If you chose to participate in this study you will be helping to advance the field of public administration, the understanding of the important role of landlords, and how to cultivate better relationships between landlords and Public Housing Authorities (PHAs). You would also assist in creating a policy solution to a public problem of landlords withdrawing from leasing through the HCVP.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. There are no risks associated with this dissertation project. It is very important for me to learn your opinions that could assist in creating affordable housing solutions that will help influence public policy for housing reform to retain landlord participation in the HCVP. The survey will ask you questions about the following information:

- Improving Communications
- Enhancing Customer Service

If you have questions that you would like answered before you decide to participate or not participate, please contact me at [mt878678@wcupa.edu](mailto:mt878678@wcupa.edu). or 813-841-3662.

Thank you very much for your time and support of my research efforts.

Sincerely,

Michael C. Threatt  
Doctoral Student, Public Administration  
West Chester University Pennsylvania

If you are willing to participate, and I hope you are, please complete the consent form via the Qualtrics survey link included in the email. The consent form has a detailed explanation of the project and is where you indicate you want to participate. Once you agree to participate, the consent form will immediately direct you to the research study survey. If you choose to participate and then later decide you don't want to, you can withdraw at any time. To participate, please click here to be taken to an informed consent form which will link to the research survey.

## Invitation 2

Dear Landlord:

Last week you received a request for your participation in a doctoral research study. If you already completed the survey, thank you. If you did not, your participation is still needed. Again, my name is Michael C. Threatt, and I am a doctoral candidate at West Chester University Pennsylvania (WCUPA) in the Department of Public Policy and Administration. I am the principal investigator for a research project on Using Input from Landlords Participating in the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) to Streamline Operations through Technology to Increase Retention.

I am sending this email today to ask you to consider participating in this research project. The goal of this study to obtain input from landlords of how to streamline HCVP operations through technology to increase retention by removing bureaucratic red tape. If you chose to participate in this study you will be helping to advance the field of public administration, the understanding of the important role of landlords, and how to cultivate better relationships between landlords and Public Housing Authorities (PHAs). You would also assist in creating a policy solution to a public problem of landlords withdrawing from leasing through the HCVP.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. There are no risks associated with this dissertation project. It is very important for me to learn your opinions that could assist in creating affordable housing solutions that will help influence public policy for housing reform to retain landlord participation in the HCVP. The survey will ask you questions about the following information:

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If you have questions that you would like answered before you decide to participate or not participate, please contact me at [mt878678@wcupa.edu](mailto:mt878678@wcupa.edu). or 813-841-3662.

Thank you very much for your time and support of my research efforts.

Sincerely,

Michael C. Threatt  
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West Chester University Pennsylvania

If you are willing to participate, and I hope you are, please complete the consent form via the Qualtrics survey link included in the email. The consent form has a detailed explanation of the project and is where you indicate you want to participate. Once you agree to participate, the consent form will immediately direct you to the research study survey. If you choose to participate and then later decide you don't want to, you can withdraw at any time. To participate, please click here to be taken to an informed consent form which will link to the research survey.

## Appendix C – Online IRB Informed Consent Form

### **Project Title: Using Input from Landlords Participating in the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) to Streamline Operations through Technology to Increase Retention**

Investigator(s): Michael Threatt; Kristen Crossney

Project Overview:

Participation in this research project is voluntary and is being done by Michael Threatt as part of his Doctoral Dissertation to obtain input from landlords participating in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) to streamline operations through technology to increase retention. Your participation will take about 5 minutes to complete. You may ask Michael Threatt any questions to help you understand this study. If you don't want to be a part of this study, it won't affect any services from West Chester University. If you choose to be a part of this study, you have the right to change your mind and stop being a part of the study at any time.

#### **1. What is the purpose of this study?**

- The purpose of this study to obtain input from landlords participating in the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) to streamline operations through technology to increase retention by removing bureaucratic red tape.

#### **2. If you decide to be a part of this study, you will be asked to do the following:**

- Surveys
- This study will take 5 minutes of your time.

#### **3. Are there any experimental medical treatments?**

- No

#### **4. Is there any risk to me?**

- None

#### **5. Is there any benefit to me?**

- Benefits to you may include: Landlord participants will not receive any direct benefits from the study. However, landlord participants may feel like they have contributed to scholarly research and the development of the body of knowledge around affordable housing and landlord retention solutions that will help influence public policy for housing reform. Landlord participants may feel supported like they have a voice, and that someone cares about their opinions. Landlord participants may also feel like they are not alone and that someone is in their corner.
- Other benefits: This research contributes both to the field of public administration and affordable housing. Future researchers and practitioners may be able to improve the

understanding of the important role of landlords, and how to cultivate better relationships between landlords and Public Housing Authorities (PHAs).

#### **6. How will you protect my privacy?**

- The session will not be recorded.
- Your records will be private. Only Michael Threatt, Kristen Crossney, and the IRB will have access to your name as having agreed to participate in the study. Your responses will be held separately without your name.
- Your name will not be used in any reports.
- Records will be stored:
  - Password Protected File/Computer
- The survey will be issued via Qualtrics software in one survey. Informed consent records will be held separately from response data to add an additional layer of protection in the unlikely layer of protection in the event of a data breach.
- Records will be destroyed 3 years after study completion.

#### **7. Do I get paid to take part in this study?**

- No

#### **8. Who do I contact in case of research related injury?**

- For any questions with this study, contact:
  - Primary Investigator: Michael Threatt at 813-841-3662 or [mt878678@wcupa.edu](mailto:mt878678@wcupa.edu)
  - Faculty Sponsor: Kristen Crossney at 610-430-5838 or [kcrossney@wcupa.edu](mailto:kcrossney@wcupa.edu)

#### **9. What will you do with my Identifiable Information/Biospecimens?**

- Not applicable.

#### **10. Statement about Future Uses?**

- Your information will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

For any questions about your rights in this research study, contact the ORSP at 610-436-3557.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (your name), have read this form and I understand the statements in this form. I know that if I am uncomfortable with this study, I can stop at any time. I know that it is not possible to know all possible risks in a study, and I think that reasonable safety measures have been taken to decrease any risk.

[Participants will sign electronically by checking a box in Qualtrics Software]

## Appendix D – IRB Approval Documents



Office of Research and Sponsored Programs | West Chester University | Wayne Hall  
West Chester, PA 19383 | 610-436-3557 | www.wcupa.edu

TO: Michael C. Threatt  
Dr. Kristen B. Crossney

FROM: Nicole M. Cattano, Ph.D.  
Co-Chair, WCU Institutional Review Board (IRB)

DATE: 10/8/2020

**Protocol ID # 20201008B**  
*This Protocol ID number must be used in all communications about this project with the IRB.*

Project Title: Using Input from Landlords Participating in the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) to Streamline Operations through Technology to Increase Retention

### Notification of Initial Study Exemption Determination

**Exempt From Further Review**

This Initial Study submission meets the criteria for exemption per the regulations found at 45 CFR 46.104 (X)(xx). As such, additional IRB review is not required.

The determination that your research is exempt does not expire, therefore, annual review is not required and no expiration date will be listed on your approval letter. If changes to the research are proposed that would alter the IRB's original exemption determination, they should be submitted to the WCU IRB for approval, using the IRB application form (check off I.G. Revision).

Your research study will be archived 3 years after initial determination. If your Exempt study is archived, you can continue conducting research activities as the IRB has made the determination that your project met one of required exempt categories. The only caveat is that no changes can be made to the application. If a change is needed, you will need to submit a NEW Exempt application. Please see [www.wcupa.edu/research/irb.aspx](http://www.wcupa.edu/research/irb.aspx) for more information.

However, it is very important that you close-out your project when completed or if you leave the university. Faculty mentors are responsible for oversight of student projects and should ensure exempt studies are completed and closed-out before the student leaves the university.

The Principal Investigator and/or faculty mentor is responsible for ensuring compliance with any applicable local government or institutional laws, legislation, regulations, and/or policies, whether conducting research internationally or nationally. Please contact the WCU Office of Sponsored Research and Programs at [irb@wcupa.edu](mailto:irb@wcupa.edu) with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicole M. Cattano'.

Co-Chair of WCU IRB

WCU Institutional Review Board (IRB)

IORG#: IORG0004242

IRB#: IRB00005030

FWA#: FWA00014155

*West Chester University is a member of the State System of Higher Education*



## Appendix E – Online Survey Instrument

*\*An asterisk answer indicates that the response disqualified the respondent from participating in this survey; the survey will take the participant to a “thank you” page and the survey will end.*

### Qualifying Questions

1. Do you have an active Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract with the Dothan Housing Authority (DHA)?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No\*
2. Have you been a landlord for at least a year?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No\*
3. What type of landlord model describes your business?
  - a. Rental Housing Owner
  - b. Property Manager
  - c. Both

### Demographics Questions

1. What is your Age?
  - a. 18 to 24
  - b. 25 to 34
  - c. 35 to 44
  - d. 45 to 54
  - e. 55 to 64
  - f. 65 and older
2. What is your Race?
  - a. White/Caucasian
  - b. Black/African American
  - c. American Indian or Alaska Native
  - d. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
  - e. Hispanic or Latino
  - f. Asian
  - g. Two or more races
  - h. Other
3. What is your Gender?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Transgender
  - d. Other
4. What is your highest level of Education?
  - a. Some High School

- b. High School
- c. Some College
- d. Associates
- e. Bachelors
- f. Masters
- g. Doctorate

### **Experience Questions**

5. Do you have a Real Estate License or a Property Management Certification?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Both
6. How long have you been a landlord with the Section 8 (HCVP)?
  - a. 1 to 2 years
  - b. 3 to 5 years
  - c. 6 to 10 years
  - d. 11 years or more
7. How many rental properties do you own, or property manage?
  - a. 1 to 4 properties
  - b. 5 to 10 properties
  - c. 11 to 20 properties
  - d. 21 properties or more
8. What type of properties do you own, or property manage?
  - a. Single-Family
  - b. Multi-Family
  - c. Both

### **Content Questions**

#### *Improving Communication*

1. Do you think that communicating through social media, text message alerts, a landlord hotline, and landlord email accounts would streamline operations and retain your participation as a landlord?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
2. Do you think that a virtual landlord liaison (staff position) that is devoted completely to landlords would streamline operations and retain your participation as a landlord?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
3. Do you think that conducting online and virtual training workshops for landlords and tenants would streamline operations and retain your participation as a landlord?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

4. Do you think that receiving an online landlord newsletter with important information and updates would streamline operations and retain your participation as a landlord?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. Do you think that establishing a virtual landlord advisory committee devoted to providing input and feedback for Section 8 (HCVP) policies and practices would streamline operations and retain your participation as a landlord?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
6. Do you think that if the Dothan Housing Authority provided virtual landlord-tenant "conflict resolution" meetings, this would streamline operations and retain your participation as a landlord?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
7. Do you think that receiving notifications about your inspection's status in "real time" through text message alerts, phone calls, and emails would streamline operations and retain your participation as a landlord?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

*Enhancing Customer Service*

8. Do you think that if the Dothan Housing Authority implemented a paperless platform that included submitting electronic documents and allowed electronic "e-signatures" would streamline operations and retain your participation as a landlord?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
9. Do you think that having an online landlord portal to track the entire lease-up process from start to finish such as submitting the request for tenancy approval (RFTA), passing the inspection, signing the lease and housing assistance payment (HAP) contract would streamline operations and retain your participation as a landlord?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
10. Do you think that having a landlord webpage & web-based fillable forms would streamline operations and retain your participation as a landlord?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
11. Do you think that if the Dothan Housing Authority implemented virtual landlord meetings and a direct phone number for landlords only would streamline operations and retain your participation as a landlord?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
12. Do you think that using remote video inspections and digital pictures for inspections would streamline operations and retain your participation as a landlord?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

13. Do you think that having access to "real time" inspection information through an online inspection portal would streamline operations and retain your participation as a landlord?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
14. Do you think that an online direct deposit payment portal that has your payment information, an electronic 1099 for filing taxes, and details about future payments would streamline operations and retain your participation as a landlord?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
15. Do you think if the DHA provided a web-based software that would allow you to market your units, respond to potential tenants, and request rent increase online, this would streamline operations and retain your participation as a landlord?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

## Appendix F– Definition of Terms

The definition of terms is common in the HCVP and the affordable housing industry. These terms are used by the HUD. These terms will be utilized throughout this research paper and listed are terms used from HUD.

- **Administrative Fee:** The fee paid by to the PHA for the administrative operations of the HCVP. The administrative fee is used to pay the salary of the HCVP staff.
- **Annual Contributions Contract (ACC):** A written contract agreement (principal-agent contract) between the HUD and the PHA. Under the terms of the contract, HUD agrees to provide funding for administrative operations of the HCVP, and the PHA promises to operate the HCVP in accordance with HUD requirements.
- **Budget Authority:** The total dollars HUD will make available for the term of a funding increment.
- **Fair Market Rent (FMR):** The rent including the cost of utilities that would be required to be paid in the housing market area to obtain privately owned rental housing. Fair Market Rents are established by HUD annually for different bedroom sizes for each county.
- **Housing Assistance Payment:** The monthly assistance payment amount of rent paid by the PHA on behalf of the voucher holder to the landlord. The payment to the landlord under the voucher holder’s lease.
- **Housing Choice Voucher:** A written agreement between the PHA and the voucher holder (tenant). This document is issued to a new voucher holder selected from the waiting list or voucher holder who is receiving continued occupancy assistance. The document describes the HCVP and the procedures for PHA approval of a unit selected by the voucher holder. The voucher also states the “family” obligations of the voucher holder under the HCVP.

- **Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract:** A written contract between a PHA and a landlord (rental property owner or property manager) that details the terms and conditions in a standardized contract form prescribed by HUD, in which the PHA agrees to make housing assistance payments (HAP) to the landlord for allowing the voucher holder to lease their unit.
- **Housing Quality Standards (HQS):** The HUD minimum quality standards for housing assisted under the HCVP.
- **Housing Software:** The software that is used to administer the HCVP by the PHA.
- **Landlord:** the term means either the rental property owner of the property or his/her representative (principal-agent agreement) or the managing agent or his/her representative, as shall be designated by the owner.
- **Landlord Incentives:** Special and incentivized payments for vacancy loss for long waiting periods, damage protection for tenant-related damages, security deposit for voucher holders who cannot afford to pay the required amount, and signing bonus adding more new units to lease for new, current, and former landlords.
- **Landlord Liaison:** The staff position that is devoted solely to landlords to provide customer service and communication about their units and updates regarding the PHA's HCVP.
- **Landlord Portal:** The landlord portal is a web-based portal for landlords to submit and receive correspondence that stores direct deposit, inspection information, newsletters, web-based forms, 1099, and other pertinent information to make the HCVP landlord-friendly. The landlord portal allows the PHA to administer the HCVP effectively and efficiently.
- **Landlord Webpage:** The landlord webpage devoted solely to landlords on the PHA website. The landlord portal can sometimes be found on the landlord webpage.

- Lease: The written agreement between the landlord (rental property owner or property manager) and the voucher holder (tenant). This contract establishes the terms and conditions for renting the unit.
- National Association of REALTORS®: A national trade association of REALTORS® for licensed real estate professionals for residential and commercial transactions who meet and adhere to high ethical standards.
- Payment Standard: The maximum monthly assistance payment for a family assisted in the HCVP. The PHA adopts a payment standard schedule that is within 90% to 110% of the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for each bedroom size.
- Per Unit Cost (PUC): Average Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) expended per unit per month.
- Property Manager: The property manager enters a property management agreement (PMA) through a principal-agent relationship with the rental property owner. The property manager represents the following rental property owners such as a) small “mom and pop” rental property owners, b) hedge funds, c) limited liability company (LLC), d) limited partnership (LP), d) limited liability partnership (LLP), or e) other investor groups.
- Public Housing Authority (PHA): Any city, county, municipality, or other governmental entity or PHA instrumentality or affiliate that is authorized to engage in or assist in the development or operation of public housing and/or the HCVP and/or and other affordable housing programs.
- Rental Property Owner: Individual homeowners (“small mom and pop”) who lease their properties (units) through the HCVP.

- Section Eight Management Assessment Program (SEMAP): A certification process that is based on 14 performance indicators and one bonus ratings that leads to a rating of a “high performer,” “standard,” “substandard,” or “troubled” PHA. SEMAP evaluates how well the PHA is meeting the mandates of the HCVP that is described in the annual contributions contract (ACC) and whether the PHA will continue to receive the administrative fee payments for providing administrative operations on behalf of HUD (principal-agent contract).
- Two-Year Forecasting Tool: The two-year tool helps the PHA optimize unit and budget utilization over multiple years. The two-year tool also allows PHAs to model funding, leasing, and spending scenarios to better inform HCVP decisions. Additionally, the two-year tool allows PHAs to develop issuances scenarios, and assess HCVP trade-offs by adjusting key variables, including per-unit-cost (PUC), attrition, and success rates.
- Unit: Residential space for the private use of a voucher holder.
- Voucher Holder (Participant): A voucher holder is an individual or a family that has been admitted to the PHA’s HCVP and is currently assisted in the HCVP. Whereas the PHA is making housing assistance payments (HAP) on their behalf to the landlord. The voucher holder has signed a housing choice “voucher” with the PHA.
- Voucher Management System (VMS): The voucher management system (VMS) collects PHA data on unit leased, HAP expenses, and other monetary information that enables HUD to fund, obligate, and disburse funding in a timely manner, based on actual PHA use.